ISRAEL/DOCUMENTS JANUARY-OCTOBER 1956 COMPANION VOLUME 11

STATE OF ISRAEL

DOCUMENTS ON THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ISRAEL, JANUARY – OCTOBER 1956

COMPANION VOLUME

STATE OF ISRAEL
ISRAEL STATE ARCHIVES

DOCUMENTS ON THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ISRAEL

VOLUME 11
JANUARY – OCTOBER 1956

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CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

The present volume is the eleventh in the series of volumes of documents relating to the foreign policy of Israel. It covers the first ten months of 1956, up to the Sinai Campaign which began on 29 October. The Sinai Campaign and its political and military results will be documented in a separate volume which will be published later.

The documents appearing in this volume are merely a limited selection of the many thousands of documents dealing with the foreign relations and security of Israel. In this volume documents dealing with domestic affairs, political and economic issues have been included only when these matters had an influence on foreign and security affairs. Strict criteria had to be applied also when making the selection of documents on foreign relations so as to remain within the framework of the volume. Thus only a small amount of documents on Israel's relations with Latin America, Eastern Europe and many other European states have been included. On the other hand, some subjects were documented almost in their entirety, such as the moves leading up to the Sèvres agreement or Israel's relations with the Eisenhower Administration. The editors wish to stress that the whole process of selection and editing took place without the imposition of any restrictions or prohibitions of a personal or political nature, and with unlimited access to archival sources.

Most of the documents in the volume come from the files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept in the Israel State Archives. Since in 1956 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was excluded from two important events – the arms purchase from France and the preparations for the Sinai Campaign, the editors had recourse to complementary material from the Israel Military and Defence Establishment Archives and from the Ben-Gurion Archives, and also used books dealing with this period.

Arrangement of the documents. The documents are arranged in chronological order. Telegrams were arranged according to the earliest known date, in most cases the date when the telegram was written. If this date was not known, the date of receipt was used. Reports of meetings and discussions were arranged according to the date of writing the report rather than the date when the meeting or discussion took place.

The text. The text printed in the Main Volume is that of the original document, except for the following editorial changes and emendations:

(a) Addresses of senders and addressees, as well as dates in their original form, have been deleted. In some reports, memoranda and minutes the original headings have also been omitted. These details have been incorporated in part in a standard format in the heading supplied by the

editors (see below) or in a note. The lists of addressees to whom copies of the documents were sent have also been omitted, except in cases where the editors felt it was important to indicate the distribution of the document, when the information was included in a footnote.

(b In some documents words or passages that are of no direct relevance to foreign policy or are of a personal nature have been omitted. All such omissions are explained in a note.

(c) Slips of the pen, typographical errors and misspellings have been corrected silently. No further attempt has been made to correct style, syntax or grammar.

(d) Common abbreviations and abbreviations whose meaning is not in doubt have been expanded to full form. In cases of doubt the abbreviation appears in full form in square brackets. Abbreviations of proper names and place names have always been expanded to full form in square brackets. Abbreviations commonly pronounced as such and acronyms (e.g., U.N., I.D.F., U.S., NATO, etc.) have not been altered.

(e) Words missing in the original have been added, either conjecturally (within square brackets) or on the basis of a parallel text of the same document (in square brackets and with an explanatory note).

(f) Original punctuation and capitalisation, as well as British or American spelling, have been retained except in cases of obvious mistakes or to avoid misunderstandings. In telegrams, where the original punctuation is partial, the editors have exercised greater liberty in determining capitalisation and punctuation.

Editorial headings. The heading includes the names of the sender and the addressee, the file reference of the document and the destination, except when the addressee is the Foreign Ministry or another agency of the Government of Israel. The origin of the document and the date are given in standard format in the heading.

Editorial Notes. These provide information on important events or developments which are not found in the documents. They have been placed before the document mentioning the subject for the first time or the date of the event and numbered in sequence together with the documents.

The footnotes explain and expand subjects which are not clear in the text, give cross-references to other documents mentioned in the text or containing further information and give references to additional literature. Biographical information has been given only when necessary for a proper understanding of the text. In other cases the biographical index, which gives basic information on most persons mentioned in the documents, should be consulted.

Companion volume. This volume consists of English summaries of the Hebrew documents and a full translation of the list of documents, introduction, editorial notes, footnotes and indexes to the Main Volume.
Indexes and list of documents. A list of documents and editorial notes, indicating their main subjects, appears at the beginning of the volume. Two indexes, one for persons, and one for topics and places, appear at the end of the volume. References in the index are to document numbers.

We would like to thank all the individuals and institutions who helped in the preparation of this volume: Ambassador (retired) Daniel Mokadi, who read the manuscript and made many important comments; Mrs. Michal Zur, the director of the Israel Defence and Military Establishment Archives, and Mrs. Hannah Pinschau, the director of the Ben-Gurion Archives, for their assistance in locating additional documentation; the veteran staff of the Foreign Ministry, who are too numerous to mention by name, who advised the editors on their field of expertise; Ambassador (retired) Yoel Sher, for his generous assistance in proofreading and solving problems connected with the documents in French; Arnon Lammfromm, who was responsible for the picture research; the Government Printer and their staff, for their dedicated and accurate work; David Herman, who translated the companion volume and Alfred Yarrow, who reviewed the translation; Joan Hooper, who was responsible for proofreading and all those who contributed to preparing and publishing this volume.

INTRODUCTION

1956 opened in Israel with a feeling of siege and isolation. This was due to a number of events which had occurred over the past few years and particularly during the preceding year. The Soviet Union's penetration into the Middle East led (in September 1955) to an arms deal between its ally Czechoslovakia and Egypt, which endowed the latter's army with modern weaponry, mainly planes and armour, so that the arms balance in the Middle East shifted against Israel. Egypt initiated a series of alliances against Israel: on 19 October 1955 it signed an agreement with Syria under which each of them undertook to come to the aid of its neighbour if attacked. A similar agreement was signed on 27 October between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In April 1956 an Egyptian-Saudi-Yemeni military agreement was signed, and in the same month agreements were also signed between Egypt and Jordan and between Syria and Jordan on military cooperation on their borders with Israel. The blockade of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, Israel's international shipping lanes, continued. The Arab states, particularly Egypt and Jordan, initiated bloody incidents on their borders with Israel as well as deep inside its territory, by means of regular and irregular forces, initially called "infiltrators" and subsequently "fedayeen," and life in the border settlements became unbearable. Israel responded with reprisal raids, which at times ended with particularly heavy losses on the Arab side, and this led to sharp condemnation of Israel in the international arena.

Already on 2 January Prime Minister Ben-Gurion warned about the serious situation which Israel was in during a political debate in the Knesset. Among other things he said: "We shall be risking our lives if we do not see with open eyes the danger of attack increasingly approaching from Egypt – and perhaps not from it alone – and if we do not prepare in advance with the essence of our moral, economic and military capability. However, we shall also be making a grave mistake if we assume that the war against us is a decree that cannot be avoided."[1]

And in fact Israel did act during the period under review in the spirit of Ben-Gurion's remarks: on the one hand, it invested vigorous efforts to procure defensive arms, as will be detailed below, while on the other it sought avenues for peace with its neighbours. In this connection the efforts of Robert Anderson must be mentioned, and his mission on behalf of President Eisenhower when he attempted to mediate between Israel and Egypt. He visited these states in January-March and again in August. In his talks with

1. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 671.

Nasser in January the latter told him that he desired peace with Israel, but as a condition for this he demanded (a) giving "freedom of choice" to the Arab refugees from Palestine between receiving compensation and returning to Israeli territory and (b) the creation of territorial continuity between Egypt and Jordan (meaning that Israel give up territory in the Negev).

In his meetings with Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Sharett, the mediator heard of Israel's desire for peace, in view of "the lack of substantial conflicts of interest between Israel and Egypt"; however they rejected Nasser's demands. They suggested a meeting between Israeli and Egyptian leaders without preconditions, and the possibility was raised of the signing of a non-aggression treaty as a transitional stage.

In March Nasser rejected the idea of a meeting, expressing fear for his fate and that of his government (in a conversation with the mediator he mentioned the assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan). He expressed willingness to continue contacts with Israel through the United States, and reiterated his two demands from the start of the talks. Ben-Gurion responded: "If Nasser recoils from a meeting out of fear for his life, who will guarantee us that he will not consider it necessary to break his promise to the envoy [Anderson] and to start a war in order to preserve his life from the fury of his Arab colleagues." In his opinion, "Nasser is playing to gain time in order to complete his army's training and to assimilate the arms," and "the only way to avoid war is to provide Israel with defensive weapons."[2]

As the sense of suffocation and siege increased in Israel, the idea of launching a preventive war against Egypt was raised, even though Israel's leaders did not admit it.[3] In this connection, there was deterioration in the relations between Ben-Gurion and Sharett, which had been tense ever since the I.D.F.'s operation on the shore of Lake Tiberias in December 1955. Ben-Gurion asserted that foreign policy was meant to serve the needs of security, whereas Sharett saw security problems as a political issue no less than a military one and preferred to exhaust political action before resorting to force of arms.

To this was added the difference of opinion between the I.D.F. and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over control of the mixed armistice commissions, a dispute which had gone on for some years. Ben-Gurion and Sharett did not see eye to eye about the measures which Israel should adopt in the demilitarized zone in Nitzana. Sharett opposed the army's plan to establish a settlement in the area in addition to Kibbutz Ktsiot, since

2. See Nos. 54 and 144.
3. See, for example, Ben-Gurion's remarks in the Knesset on 18 June 1956: "A preventive war is madness." *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 2069.

this ran counter to commitments made to United Nations Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. After a sharp exchange in the government meeting it was decided to postpone the establishment of the settlement, but to continue with the necessary development work.[4] Following this, an acrimonious correspondence ensued between the two. Ben-Gurion threatened to resign from the government immediately after the "danger of war" had passed, and maintained that Sharett was expecting him to forego his views as minister of defence and to act as an adviser to the minister of foreign affairs. Sharett responded: "I am not prepared to serve in a government in which the basic concepts of mutual assistance, collective responsibility and fulfillment of primary obligations are not accepted in practice."[5]

Against this background, apparently, Ben-Gurion decided that the time had come for Sharett to leave the government. At the end of May-beginning of June Sharett was informed that Ben-Gurion was demanding his resignation, and threatening that if Sharett did not resign, he himself would step down as head of the government.[6] Sharett had no alternative but to submit his resignation at the special government meeting on 18 June, and on the same day he explained to the Knesset the background to his resignation. He said that at the formation of the Ben-Gurion government in November 1955 he had been reluctant to join it because he had a "well-founded suspicion" that cooperation between himself and Ben-Gurion would not succeed, but Ben-Gurion had rejected his refusal. During his term of office in the government the partnership between the two of them had undergone a number of "tests which were not easy," but in view of the state of emergency in the country and in an attempt to preserve their cooperation of many years' duration, they had overcome them. However, in recent weeks it had become clear to him that resignation was unavoidable.[7]

In a Knesset debate on the resignation on 19 June, Ben-Gurion explained the background as follows: "Since the security affairs of the state had become particularly acute, and foreign policy dangers had grown more than in the past [...] I came to the conclusion that it is now essential for the good of the state that there should be full coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, and that a different leadership is now required for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [...] as long as there is a real danger of our being attacked by our neighbours, security needs must

4. See stenographic report of the government meeting of 18 March 1956, pp. 11-38.
5. See *Moshe Sharett: The Second Prime Minister (1894-1965)* [Hebrew], No. 146 and No. 159 in this volume.
6. See *Moshe Sharett*, ibid., pp. 565-566.
7. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, pp. 2042-2043.

have first priority. This means that both foreign and internal policy have to be coordinated to serve the needs of security."[8]

In place of Sharett, the Minister of Labour, Golda Myerson, who agreed with Ben-Gurion's views, was appointed. In July 1956 she took the Hebrew name Meir.

In the summer of 1956 the ties between the defence establishments of France and Israel became increasingly close, as they both saw Nasser as a common enemy (France mainly because of Nasser's support for the Algerian rebels). After Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company on 26 July, in September France informed Israel of its intention to launch an offensive against Nasser together with Britain. France invited Israel to join in, and Ben-Gurion, who saw an opportunity to launch a preventive war against Egypt in conjunction with the Powers, accepted the challenge. On 29 October Israel launched the campaign known as "Operation Kadesh" (the Sinai Campaign).

Israel's Relations with the United States

Israel's relations with the United States in the period under review were influenced, as in past years, by concern for its security as a result of the upsetting of the arms balance between it and the Arab states. These concerns increased following the Czech-Egyptian arms deal in September 1955.[9] Israel hoped that Washington would help it in two ways: by signing a security agreement or pact and by the supply of arms. In these two spheres it was bitterly disappointed. In February U.S. Secretary of State Dulles said that despite the negotiations which took place two years earlier, the United States had never seriously contemplated signing a security agreement with Israel.[10] Israeli Ambassador Eban reacted with dismay, but Sharett cabled in response that "all our energy today must be directed to demanding arms,"

8. See ibid., pp. 2067-2068.
9. The following is a summary of developments in the area of arms procurement from the United States, from the time of the Egyptian-Czech deal until the end of 1955: Sharett raised the issue with Dulles in Paris on 26 October (see Eban (from Paris) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, unnumbered telegram dated 26 October 1955, 130.02/2456/8) and in Geneva on 31 October (see Eban (from Geneva), Tel. 32, 31 October 1956, 130.09/2310/16). In the second conversation Dulles said that "there will be a favourable study of any list which Israel presents, and if the types of weapons are defensive – the discussion will be still more favourable." However, on 13 December 1955 Eban was informed by the State Department that because of various factors, in particular the Lake Tiberias incident (on the night between 11-12 December 1955) the secretary was unable to keep his promise (see No. 172, n. 5).
10. See No. 105.

whereas the slogan of a security agreement, which "we do not renounce, is for the moment played down."[11]

However, talks on arms supply held by the Israeli embassy staff in Washington, headed by Eban, at the State Department did not produce the desired results. Ben-Gurion sent two letters on the issue to President Eisenhower. The first, dated 14 February,[12] received an evasive response.[13] In reply to the second letter, dated 16 March[14] Eban was summoned to the State Department on 28 March and heard from Dulles explicitly that the United States believed that for the benefit of the West and Israel, it must maintain and bolster its influence in the Arab world, and because of this, it hoped that Israel would concentrate its efforts on seeking mainly defensive weapons in European countries from which it had received arms in the past. The United States government had helped with the "Mystère deal"[15] and would view further projects favourably: "I am not certain that it is vital for Israel necessarily to receive its main arms from the United States." Dulles added that he had been forced to adopt a policy that would prevent splitting the Middle East between the Arab world backed by the Soviets, and Israel backed by the West. In order to promote the influence of the United States government in the Arab world he had to avoid excessive identification with Israel.[16]

In his remarks about arms Dulles was referring mainly to France,[17] Italy,[18] and also to Canada.[19]

Following Eban's disappointing conversation with Dulles, on 3 April a consultation regarding arms procurement took place with the participation of Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Lieutenant-General Moshe Dayan, the I.D.F. chief

11. See No. 136.
12. See No. 91.
13. See No. 112.
14. See No. 152.
15. See No. 1, n. 1.
16. See No. 165.
17. In the middle of the year the defence establishments of France and Israel reached an agreement under which France opened up its arms storerooms to Israel – See No. 316, n. 1.
18. However, contrary to Dulles' remarks, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on 7 April to Israel's ambassador in Rome that the United States embassy had informed them that Washington was unable to authorise the sale of F-86 planes to Israel – see No. 165, n. 9.
19. After negotiations between Canada and Israel, with the help of the United States, Ottawa agreed on 20 September to supply Israel with 24 F-86 planes. This transaction was suspended due to the outbreak of the Sinai Campaign. In December Israel decided to see in the suspension a pretext for cancelling the transaction (see No. 429 and Comay to Leger, 93.08/391/2, 31 December 1956).

of staff, and Shimon Peres, the director-general of the Defence Ministry. Describing Peres' activity in France as nothing short of miraculous, Dayan suggested that dealing with arms procurement be transferred from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs missions abroad to the Ministry of Defence delegations and the I.D.F attachés. Sharett responded that negotiations with Army headquarters and factory managements would not bring results without a political decision by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, contact with which was conducted only through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs missions. Ben-Gurion ruled that "We must immediately cease all further lobbying in the United States, and also not exploit its mediation for obtaining arms from other states, but approach them directly." Sharett summed up in his diary: "The consultation was confused and ended inconclusively. We did not resolve the main question of the tactics vis-à-vis the United States, and I saw no [need] at all to raise it in the presence of military men who had no connection with the issue."[20]

In spite of Ben-Gurion's decision, Eban continued with efforts in the State Department to obtain arms, which were unsuccessful.[21] Ben-Gurion also softened his position, and this is how he summed up the situation with regard to procurement from the United States in his speech in the Knesset on 15 October: "The United States [...] has recognised in theory the need to adjust the arms balance between Israel and the neighbouring countries and has encouraged its allies to supply us with defensive weapons. We cannot be satisfied with this encouragement alone, and we shall continue to demand from the United States government defensive weapons in the air, land and sea, which will deter the enemy. Nonetheless, we also do not underestimate the value of encouragement, which has also yielded concrete results."[22]

The issue of aid for setting up water projects was second in importance in the overall relations between the two states. In 1953 sharp differences of opinion had emerged between them after Israel began (in September) to carry out diversionary work in the channel of the Jordan river, south of the Benot Yaaqov Bridge (in the demilitarized zone on the Syrian border), as the first stage of the national water project for diverting the Jordan waters to the Negev. At that time the United States was engaged in drawing up a regional water plan to exploit the waters of the Jordan and the Yarmuk rivers, in accordance with the request of the United Nations Relief and

20. See M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, pp. 1385-1386 [Hebrew].
21. For example, on 9 August Dulles told Eban that the United States wished to deny Nasser the possibility of presenting to the Arab world that the supply of arms to Israel was in reprisal for the nationalisation of the Suez Canal (See No. 375).
22. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), Second Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XXI, p. 58.

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (U.N.R.W.A.). The initiative taken by Israel, without consulting with the United States, was interpreted in the State Department as opposition to American policy. Washington reacted angrily by witholding the grant-in-aid to Israel, while Syria lodged a complaint with the Security Council. Israel was compelled to suspend work in the demilitarized zone, and only then did the United States release the grant, totalling 26 million dollars.[23]

The task of preparing the regional water plan of the United States was entrusted to Eric Johnston, the chairman of the Advisory Board for International Development and a confidant of President Eisenhower. In 1953-1955 he visited Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan several times for discussions with their leaders. In 1955 he presented his plan, and in 1956 an improved version of it.[24] Israel and Jordan accepted the plan. Syria and Lebanon rejected it. Nasser took it upon himself to persuade Syria to accept the plan, but did not keep his word. In October 1955 Sharett told Johnston that Israel was prepared to delay carrying out the work in the demilitarized zone until February 1956. Consequently, at the beginning of January 1956 Sharett instructed Eban to inform Johnston that Israel considered itself free to resume the work in the demilitarized zone at the end of the rainy season, in addition to work being carried on outside the demilitarized zone. Eban was asked to find out if Israel could receive financial assistance for its project in exchange for an undertaking on its part that, in the event that the Johnston plan was not implemented, it would not deviate from the quantities of water allocated to it under the plan. Sharett explained that this presentation of Israel's position was a tactic to try to get the United States to offer financial aid to Israel for its water plan, on condition that it avoided working in the demilitarized zone "for the present."[25]

In March Israel submitted its request for a $75 million loan both to the Export-Import Bank and to the State Department.[26] Dulles promised to support Israel's request to the Export-Import Bank, and to explain that the possibility existed of agreement with Israel concerning projects connected with the waters of the Yarmuk which would not run counter to the Johnston plan, and which could be implemented separately and concurrently with

23. On the affair and its repercussions on Israel's relations with the United States, Syria and the U.N., see introduction to *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 8, Companion Volume, pp. xxxiv-xxxviii.

24. The main points of the Johnston plan: division of the waters of the Jordan and the Yarmuk as follows: to Jordan – 56%, to Israel – 31%, to Syria – 10.3%, to Lebanon – 2.7% (See A. Soffer, *Rivers of Fire: the Conflict over Water in the Middle East*, pp.158-161).

25. See No. 62.

26. See No. 155.

a certain project in the Kingdom of Jordan.[27] In August Eban reported that he had heard from Johnston that the latter had been asked by the management of the Export-Import Bank if he saw any reason to oppose the loan, and he had answered that he saw none, on condition that the matter was financially sound.[28] In September talks took place on the issue with the heads of the Bank, with the participation of the Minister of Finance, Levi Eshkol.[29] Following them, on 9 October, the president of the Bank, Waugh, announced that the Bank was prepared to send a delegation to Israel in order to examine the subject on the spot (in view of Israel's difficult economic situation at that time, there were doubts in the Bank regarding Israel's ability to repay the loan). An official announcement on the matter was issued on 11 October, and in it prominence was given to the fact that the delegation would be headed by the Bank's vice-president, L.V. Stambaugh.[30] Because of the Sinai Campaign the delegation's visit was postponed and took place only in July 1957.[31]

Israel's Relations with Britain

The period under review began with the "Guildhall speech" by Foreign Minister Anthony Eden (9 November 1955) still echoing in Israel. In this speech he called, among other things, for a reduction of its borders.[32] In reply Ben-Gurion declared in the Knesset on 15 November 1955 that Eden's suggestion lacked any legal or ethical basis, and should not even be considered.[33] Off the record Ben-Gurion said: "Outside the Middle East I see two great powers whose rulers do not care about the destruction of Israel. One of the powers is the Soviet Union, and the second [...]England [...] In

27. This refers to the Eastern Ghor plan whose aim was to transport water from the Yarmuk in a canal along the Jordan Valley and from there to carry it by secondary channels to irrigate fields in the region.
28. See No. 404, n. 5.
29. See No. 415.
30. See No. 475.
31. In the end the loan was authorised in March 1958, but the sum was much lower than that requested by Israel: 24.3 million dollars (See Vol. 13, No. 59. notes 1 and 2).
32. In the first half of 1955 the United States and Britain worked out a plan for an overall settlement between Israel and its neighbours which was given the code name "Project Alpha." Central to it was the proposal for territorial concessions by Israel and a guarantee by the Western Powers of its new borders. The "Guildhall speech" was based on this plan.
33. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 325.

my opinion, for both of them acquiring Arab friends is most important of all [...] and Eden is not much different in his attitude to Israel from Bevin."[34]

These remarks expressed Israel's suspicion of Britain, which at that time was in the throes of giving up its assets in the Middle East. In March 1956 the British commander of the Jordanian Arab Legion, Lieutenant-General John B. Glubb, was dismissed. In June the British army evacuated the Suez Canal region. Britain made efforts to retain control over positions which it still held, principally in the Hashemite states – oil-rich Iraq, and Jordan, where it had military bases. Hence its frosty attitude towards Israel, which was expressed in several issues:

- *Entry of an Iraqi army into Jordan.* Britain and its Hashemite allies initiated (in October) a plan for the entry of an Iraqi army into Jordan, in order to save it from Nasserite subversion. Israel was not happy about this (Iraq, which had invaded Israel in 1948, had refused to sign an armistice agreement with it). In the end Israel's fears were not realised. The Iraqi army, which entered Jordan in November and left in December, was stationed only on the East Bank and had no contact with the I.D.F.
- *The situation on the Jordan-Israel border.* Jordan had an agreement with Britain, signed in 1948, under which Britain was obligated to come to its assistance if it was attacked. The more the situation on the Jordan-Israel border worsened, and as a result the scale of the Israeli reprisal raids, the greater grew the danger of British military intervention against Israel. The Israeli reprisal raids in Qalqiliya on the night of 10-11 October exceeded previous raids in scope, and difficulties arose compelling the I.D.F. to call in the air force. King Hussein then asked for British military assistance. Only the fact that the battle had ended in the meantime saved the I.D.F. from a serious confrontation with the forces of Her Majesty's Government.[35] Ben-Gurion had good reason to make Israel's participation in the Franco-British campaign against Egypt conditional on a British undertaking not to come to the aid of Jordan if the latter attacked Israel.[36]
- *Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company.* In its diplomatic efforts in reaction to Nasser's step of nationalising the Suez Canal (the three London conferences and the debates in the Security Council), Britain did not involve Israel (see below, "Israel and the Suez Canal Company Nationalisation Crisis").
- *The British-French campaign against Egypt (Operation Musketeer).* Britain was in no hurry to include Israel in the campaign, and agreed to it

34. See stenographic record of the government meeting of 4 December 1955, pp. 10-11.
35. See No. 476.
36. See No. 500.

in spite of itself only after it transpired that this step alone was capable of supplying the pretext which was vital for the operation. In discussions prior to the campaign, Britain tried as much as possible to avoid direct contact with Israel, and France was compelled to mediate between its two partners. Characteristic of this situation was the fact that the letter in which Britain announced its final agreement to participate in the campaign was sent only to Guy Mollet, the French prime minister. The latter informed Ben-Gurion in a letter of his own about France's agreement as well as that of Britain.[37]

- *The sphere of arms procurement.* Here too, Israel did not obtain much satisfaction from Britain. The main item which it asked for were Centurion tanks, in order to balance, even if only partially, the 230 T-34 tanks which Egypt had received in the Czech arms deal. Its requests were rejected on a variety of grounds: 1. Israel's reprisal raids against Jordan[38]; 2. The fear that supplying arms to Israel would make it easier for Nasser to unite all the Arab states around him.[39] Nevertheless, Israel was supplied with a limited number of items: Mosquito and Meteor planes, cannon, armoured personnel carriers, radar instruments and anti-tank mines. Two destroyers were also sold to Israel.[40]

Israel's Relations with France

In the period under review France became the main source of Israeli military procurement. Evidence of this can be found in Ben-Gurion's remarks during a political debate in the Knesset on 15 October 1956. Among other things he said: "We owe a great debt of gratitude and sincere thanks to France which was the first to supply us with 24 new jet planes of the Mystère 4 type." Hinting at the other items of weaponry which France had supplied, he said: "I shall not dwell on the affair of our efforts to ensure for the Israel Defense Forces a minimum of the essential equipment, because this affair has not ended yet [...] and perhaps it would be appropriate for me to tell you of one of the experiences as it was immortalised by a poet of tremendous expressive power who signs himself Nathan A." He then read out a poem written by the poet Nathan Alterman, after he had been invited to witness the unloading of an arms consignment that had arrived from France. Ben-Gurion continued: "In my poor prose I shall only say that there has

37. See Nos. 501 and 505.
38. See No. 319.
39. See No. 367.
40. See No. 389

been a marked change for the better in the I.D.F.'s capability [...] we are not defenseless as we were at the beginning of the year."[41]

The improvement in Franco-Israeli relations had already begun in 1954, when France invited Chief of Staff Dayan for an official visit. It also approved several of Israel's arms requests. Behind the rapprochement between the two states were firstly France's difficulties in North Africa, particularly in Algeria, which led to its confrontation with the Arab League states, with Egypt at their head; secondly, the fact that Britain and the United States ignored France when they organised pacts for the defence of the Middle East which France viewed as adversely affecting its interests in the region (both France and Israel were opposed to the Baghdad Pact which was signed as a result of this activity); and lastly France's desire to adopt an independent political line in its international policy. However, there was a difference between the attitude of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the "Quai" [d' Orsay] in Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs parlance) and that of the French defence establishment.

The French diplomats thought that Egypt could be appeased and were afraid of a rift between themselves and their American and British allies, hence their reservations about drawing too close to Israel. On the other hand the defence establishment harboured no illusions regarding relations with the Arab states and saw Israel as an important ally, which could be helpful in the struggle against Nasser. Therefore they approved several of Israel's arms requests, at times without the knowledge of their Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In July 1955 France agreed to sell Israel 12 Mystère A4 type planes. These were being made in France for NATO with American funding, hence American approval was needed for selling them to Israel. The sale also required the authorisation of the "Near East Arms Coordinating Committee" of the three Western Powers.[42] Because of this there was a delay in delivering the planes. In September 1955 the Czech-Egyptian arms transaction was made under which Egypt received 100-150 MIG jet fighters, about 50 Ilyushin-22 bombers, and about 70 Ilyushin-14 transport planes. In view

41. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), Second Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XXI, pp. 58-60.
42. See No. 1, n.1.

of this development the Israeli need for planes increased still further.[43] Meanwhile, a fresh obstacle arose; on account of the I.D.F. operation on Lake Tiberias on the night of 11-12 December 1955, the three Western powers decided to halt the supply of arms to Israel until the end of the Security Council debate on Syria's complaint about the Israeli operation. This debate ended on 19 January 1956, and, after a new government had come to power in France on 31 January, the Israeli ambassador in Paris, Jacob Tsur, renewed his efforts to obtain arms from France, especially the planes. To this end he met with the three central figures in the new government: Prime Minister Guy Mollet, Minister of Foreign Affairs Christian Pineau, and Minister of Defence Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury.

Pineau told Tsur (on 1 March) that he had informed the Americans and the British that France would deliver the planes to Israel on 15 March, whatever their answer was.[44] On 6 March the French minister of defence told Tsur that he had received an instruction to deliver the 12 Mystères and promised to support Israel's request for a further 12 planes and for tanks.[45] The prime minister told Tsur (on 10 March) that he was authorising him to inform Ben-Gurion that France would continue to supply Israel with arms, on condition that this was done in secret and that the arms would reach Israel in installments.[46] In fact the 12 Mystères reached Israel on 11 April.

A day earlier, on 10 April, a consultation regarding arms procurement from France was held in Ben-Gurion's office, with the participation of Sharett, Dayan, Peres and Tsur, who had arrived in Israel for the planned visit of the French minister of foreign affairs. The visit was cancelled at the last moment

43. After the Czech-Egyptian arms deal, Sharett, who was still prime minister, left for talks in Paris and Geneva with the ministers of foreign affairs of the three Western Powers and of the Soviet Union, in order to ask for defensive weapons for Israel. He also met on 26 October 1955 with the French prime minister, Edgar Faure, who told him: "Mr. Prime Minister, there are no differences of opinion between us […] what can I do for you?" Sharett gave him a list of weapons which Faure passed on to the minister of defense. Further talks were held with the minister of defense and the minister of foreign affairs in a positive atmosphere (See J. Tsur, *Paris Diary*, pp. 187-188 and 190-191 [Hebrew]). As a result of these talks, at the beginning of November an agreement was signed between France and Israel, under which Israel would "immediately" receive 12 Ouragan planes and 12 Mystère A4 aircraft, as well as 60 AMX-type tanks and additional items of weaponry. The French undertook to make an effort to supply Israel with another 60 Mystères within three months (see Tsur and Peres' telegram to Ben-Gurion, Sharett and Dayan, No. 42, 4 November 1955, 130.09/2346/4).
44. See No. 119, n. 2.
45. See No. 134, and also J. Tsur, *Paris Diary*, pp. 230-231 [Hebrew].
46. See No. 143,and also J. Tsur, ibid., pp. 244-245.

due to serious incidents on the border with the Gaza Strip. Tsur reviewed Franco-Israeli relations and concluded that despite the positive attitude of that country, Israel could still expect difficult struggles, particularly with regard to the supply of the planes. He added that a coordinated effort by all the agencies of Israel was required in order to achieve the goal. Dayan asked if the possibility existed of making an arrangement with the Ministry of Defence in order to overcome the opposition of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Tsur replied that there was no chance of such a deal. The minister of defence did not belong to the prime minister's party, whose strength was decisive. He said further that he was certain that nothing would be done without the agreement and knowledge of the minister of foreign affairs, In his diary Tsur wrote: "It seems to me that there is something hidden behind the chief of staff's question."[47]

Just before Tsur's return to Paris, Ben-Gurion gave him a letter to the French prime minister, Guy Mollet. In the letter he described the danger of destruction which a heavily-armed Egypt posed for Israel, and asked France to assist in restoring the balance of forces between the two states. Tsur delivered the letter on 16 April, at a meeting with Mollet, at which Peres was also present. Mollet responded that France would do all in its power, but unfortunately, "only what was in its power." At the same time, he reiterated his identification with Israel and his readiness to do everything in order to rush aid to it.[48]

Afterwards Peres met, this time alone, with Minister of Defence Bourgès-Maunoury, and on 23 April signed an agreement with him for the delivery of a further 12 planes of the Mystère A4 type.[49]

Tsur, on his part, met on 24 April with the Foreign Minister Pineau, and handed him a letter from Sharett. Pineau voiced criticism that Israel's arms demands reached him "through different channels." He said that 12 more Mystères would be ready at the end of May, and he was able to promise that Israel would receive them[50] (without knowing that his colleague, the minister of defence, had already signed an agreement with Peres the previous day).

The ties between the defence establishments of the two states grew still closer, and became increasingly intimate. In June an agreement was signed between them under which France undertook to open its arms warehouses

47. See Tsur, ibid, pp. 242-243.
48. See No. 202, and also Tsur, ibid., pp. 244-245.
49. See M. Bar-On, *Challenge and Quarrel: The Road to Sinai – 1956*, pp. 145-146 [Hebrew].
50. See No. 216.

to Israel, without asking permission from the United States and Britain. In return Israel undertook to provide military and intelligence cooperation that would assist France in its fight against the rebels in Algeria, and against Nasser who was helping them, after France had been convinced that Israel could do this. Israel's readiness to pay for the arms in cash and in dollars was an additional factor in France's agreement to the deal.[51]

As a result of this agreement Pineau informed Tsur on 3 July that he and the minister of defence had agreed on a plan to supply Israel with arms secretly, without the knowledge of the United States and Britain. He added that the practical arrangements would be made directly between the defence establishments of the two states. Further details, he added, could not be divulged even to Tsur. Tsur reported back to Israel, and in response received an instruction to come immediately to Jerusalem. In his talks with Ben-Gurion and Myerson it became clear to him that the information had already been given to them by the Ministry of Defence. Tsur requested to maintain coordination between the embassy and the Ministry of Defence delegation in Paris. He also said that for the sake of the secrecy of the operation it was important that he should continue "for the sake of appearances" with his lobbying to receive arms.[52]

The first arms shipment arrived on 24 July in the dead of night aboard a French landing craft in the Kishon port. It contained 30 tanks of the AMX13 type and 60 tons of spare parts. The second shipment, of 30 tanks and spare parts, arrived on 30 July in the same way. The third shipment, of over 100 tons of shells, arrived on 3 August. The fourth shipment arrived on 13 August and the fifth on 30 August. After that it was decided that Israel would bring the arms shipments in regular ships, since the French needed the landing craft for preparation for "Operation Musketeer." In addition, Israel Air Force pilots flew 36 planes of the Mystère A4 type in direct flights from France to Israel.[53]

The close ties between the defence establishments of France and Israel led to Israel hearing for the first time about the British and French plans to attack Egypt, with Israel supplying the pretext, from the French defence establishment.[54]

51. See M. Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, pp. 25-36.
52. See No. 316, n. 3.
53. See Golani, ibid.
54. See below.

Israel's Relations with the Soviet Union and the East European States

Israel's relations with the Soviet Union in the period under review were marked by the latter's increasing interest in the Middle East and the strengthening of its ties with Arab states, whilst adopting a line which worried Israel. In a speech in the Supreme Soviet on 29 December 1955 Khrushchev said among other things: "One cannot [...] fail to recognize as deserving of condemnation the acts of the State of Israel, which ever since it came into being has been threatening its neighbours and pursuing a policy hostile to them. It stands to reason that such a policy does not conform to the national interests of the State of Israel, and that imperialist Powers stand behind those who are carrying out this policy. They are seeking to use Israel as their instrument against the Arab peoples with an eye to the ruthless exploitation of the natural wealth of that area."[55] The Soviet press and its official spokesmen repeated this version on different occasions. The subject came up at a meeting between the Israeli ambassador in Moscow, Avidar, and Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov on 1 February 1956. The ambassador summed up the situation between the two states as follows: "It is hard to point to any progress in relations [...] there are limited trade relations, but the efforts to expand them and diversify them have not produced any positive results. Cultural relations are almost non-existent [...] the sale of Czech arms to Egypt and the position taken by the Soviet Union on this issue have had a harmful and direct effect on Israel's vital interests. Presenting Israel to the Soviet public in a negative and one-sided light, and recently the remarks of Khrushchev in the Supreme Soviet, displayed an unfriendly attitude towards Israel." The ambassador continued: "Israel conducts an independent policy, it does not have military bases for foreign states [...] it aspires to the strengthening of friendly ties and expanding relations with the Soviet Union. This aspiration has not been reciprocated by the Soviet Union."

Molotov replied that it should be remembered that the Soviet Union had helped with the establishment of the State of Israel. It had hoped that friendly relations would develop between Israel and the Soviet Union, but foreign and "aggressive" influences had begun to be felt in Israel, and its leaders had begun to adopt an extreme anti-Soviet policy, "similar to the most reactionary and aggressive circles in the world." "This attitude," said Molotov, "and public appearances accompanying it had led to the

55. Sharett rejected Khrushchev's remarks in a political speech in the Knesset on 2 January (see *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, pp. 677-678).

'Tel Aviv incident' and the rift in relations.[56] With the healing of the rift, normal relations had begun to develop, until 'certain states' had begun to attack the modest arms transaction between Czechoslovakia and Egypt [...] the opinions voiced in Israel on this subject were sharper than what was said by the extremists among 'those with selfish interests in the region.'" Molotov concluded by saying that Khrushchev had analysed the situation "honestly and straightforwardly" and that, had Israel not hitched itself up to the anti-Soviet wagon, relations would most certainly have developed increasingly.[57]

Prior to the visits of Khrushchev and Bulganin to Britain (in April) and Mollet and Pineau to the Soviet Union (in May), on 17 April the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement about the situation in the Middle East,[58] which was designed to delineate the focus of the talks and to establish a priori the Soviet Union's status as a party to any Middle East settlement. The statement contained a number of positive elements from Israel's standpoint, such as the Soviet Union's support for Israel's independence, its opposition to changing the armistice lines by force, and a call for a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Arab states. Sharett analysed the statement in a speech in the Knesset on 23 April, and among other things said that it would be judged by its results. It contained "certain new elements" compared to statements made in recent months, but also some negative aspects from Israel's standpoint, for example, when it mentioned the need for a peace settlement between Israel and the Arab states, it did not say that such a settlement must be achieved through direct negotiation.[59]

The Soviet Union had disregarded Israel's proposals for signing a trade and payments agreement, with a view to expanding trade relations between them, but had agreed that its fuel company, "Soyuzneft Export," would sign (in July 1956) an agreement with the Israeli companies "Delek" and "Yarden," under which the Israeli companies were supposed to purchase, in 1957, 300,000 tons of crude oil and 220,000 tons of mazut (fuel oil) and in 1958, 350,00 tons of crude oil and 270,00 tons of mazut. At the same time there were negotiations between Israeli and Soviet companies for the purchase of drilling equipment which were unsuccessful. After the

56. On 9 February 1953, explosives were thrown into the courtyard of the Soviet legation in Israel. Three of the legation personnel were wounded and damage was done to the building. This act served as a pretext for the Soviet Union to sever its diplomatic relations with Israel. Relations were renewed in June of that year.
57. See No. 66.
58. The main points of the declaration, see No. 205.
59. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 1725 [Hebrew].

Arab states reacted angrily to the fuel deal with Israel, the Soviet Union tried to downplay its importance. At a press conference on 21 July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shepilov, said that this deal "is an unimportant trade agreement, to which unfortunately certain people ascribe exaggerated importance. One should not emphasize here [...] political aspects which do not exist."[60] Following the Sinai campaign the Soviets unilaterally broke off their trade relations with Israel.

Among the issues concerning which there were disagreements between the Soviet Union and Israel were Moscow's reactions to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company and Israel's reprisal raids. The Soviet Union maintained that "the principle of freedom of shipping which was laid down in the 1888 Constantinople Convention remains inviolate and has been fully observed." It demanded that the Arab states and other countries be invited to the London conference which was to discuss the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, but Israel was not included among them. Nor did it back Israel's request to enable it to intervene in the Security Council debates concerning the nationalisation.[61]

The Soviet Union reacted sharply to Israel's reprisal raids and associated them with the tension in the Middle East on account of the Suez crisis.

In the period under review Israel continued to follow the situation of Soviet Jewry closely through "Nativ," an organization established in 1954. Its emissaries worked in the framework of the embassy in Moscow in order to disseminate information about Israel among the Jews and to distribute material, including daily and festival prayer books. They also made contact with worshippers in the synagogues and especially encouraged them to immigrate to Israel.

In 1955 a section of "Nativ" called "Bar" was set up whose task it was to bring the issue of Soviet Jewry and the Jews of Eastern Europe to the attention of the Western states. Among its operations in the year under review: exploiting the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to Britain to bring the issue of Soviet Jewry before the Soviet leaders through British personalities, like the Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell; a high-level delegation of the French Socialist Party which visited the Soviet Union in June acted in a similar fashion; in February a Jewish journalist was sent from New York to the Soviet Union and on his return he reported the disappearance of 68 writers and Yiddish cultural figures, half of whom had been executed without trial in August 1952.

60. See No. 343, n.1.
61. See Nos. 376 and 455.

In conclusion, it may be said that Israel's efforts to improve its relations with the Soviet Union in the period under review were unsuccessful, because the latter preferred to strengthen its ties with the Arab states. The Soviet leaders, to justify their position, accused Israel of adopting an extreme anti-Soviet stance under "foreign" and "aggressive" influence.

On the other hand Israel made some modest headway in its relations with East European states, particularly in the area of trade and cultural ties.[62]

Czechoslovakia's arms transactions with Egypt (September 1955) and Syria (February 1956) cast a heavy shadow over its relations with Israel, which had suffered from tension as a result of the anti-Israel, anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish tone expressed during the Slánský trial. The release of Mordechai Oren led to an improvement in relations, expressed among other things by raising the level of representation between the two states from permanent chargés d'affaires to ministers. Nevertheless, the fact that Oren's release did not lead to the clearing of the accused's name or put an end to the campaign of defamation against the State of Israel and its leaders continued to cloud relations between the two states. Nor was there any positive movement on the subjects of immigration and the Prisoners of Zion (imprisoned Zionists).

In the period under review, trade and tourism relations between Israel and Poland grew stronger. Israel participated for the first time in the international trade fair which took place in Poznań. Cultural ties expanded and there was an increase in immigration to Israel, both in the context of reunification of families and of the immigration of orphans. The improvement in political relations led Israel to appoint a minister in its Warsaw mission, after three years during which a permanent chargé d'affaires had headed it.

In Hungary the release of Prisoners of Zion contributed to an improvement in relations. In June a new trade agreement was signed. The number of immigrants rose as compared with 1955, but the problem of immigration, including that of family reunification, had not yet been resolved.

Relations with Romania were under the shadow of the restriction on emigration and the non-release of Prisoners of Zion (some of them were released in May) although the authorities did promise to review favourably requests for the reunification of separated families. There was some progress in cultural ties.

The shooting down of an El Al plane, which entered Bulgarian air space in July 1955, adversely affected relations with Bulgaria. Israel's demand for compensation was not accepted, and the issue continued to be a subject for negotiation between the two states. Bulgaria did not put obstacles in the way

62. *Government Year-Book 5717 (1956)*, pp. 250-251.

of potential immigrants and cultural relations, which had been weakened as a result of the downing of the plane, began to improve gradually.

In the period under review exchanges of parliamentary delegations and exchange visits of scientists took place between Yugoslavia and Israel. Good relations also existed between the trade unions of the two states and between the youth movements.

Israel's Relations with the Federal German Republic

In the period under review the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) continued to abide scrupulously by the reparations agreement signed in September 1952 and ratified by the Bundestag (the German parliament) in March 1953.

After the signing of the reparations agreement Chancellor Adenauer suggested establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, but Ben-Gurion, who had steered the course of Israeli-German relations from the beginning, felt that the time was not yet ripe since Israeli public opinion was not yet sufficiently ready for it.[63] In the absence of diplomatic relations, German-Israeli relations were conducted through the reparations delegation in Cologne, headed by Dr. F. Eliezer Shinnar (at that time he held the rank of minister, later of ambassador). The Germans conferred diplomatic status on this delegation, which was attached to the Israeli Finance Ministry, and apart from a small consular department there were no officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As Germany's international standing grew, Israel's attitude towards the establishment of diplomatic relations began to change. However the Germans were in no hurry. In the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs they were afraid that establishing diplomatic relations with Israel might lead to the recognition by the Arab states of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and establishing relations with it. This step would oblige West Germany to sever its relations with those states, in accordance with the "Hallstein Doctrine," whereby West Germany did not have diplomatic relations with a state which had established such relations with East Germany (with the exception of the Soviet Union). Highly influential circles among businessmen and financial personalities in Germany were interested in economic cooperation with the Arab states and feared negative repercussions in the event of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

63. See A. Ben-Natan, "The Way to the Establishment of Relations: the Israeli Aspect" in "*Normal Relations": the Relations between Germany and Israel,* p. 24 [Hebrew].

As an alternative to the establishment of diplomatic relations, in 1955 Germany had proposed, via Dr. Shinnar, sending an economic-consular delegation to Israel similar in form to the Israeli delegation in Cologne. Shinnar reported back to Israel and subsequently the Israeli government, on 15 January 1956, held a debate on relations with Germany. A proposal to act to establish normal diplomatic relations with it was rejected, and instead it was decided "to authorise the minister of foreign affairs to take all the steps necessary to bring about the immediate setting up of an economic-consular delegation of the German Federal Republic in Israel."[64]

At the same time Israel made a number of concessions towards Germany: it stopped voting against it at international conferences, Israeli diplomats were permitted to have contact with their German counterparts, it was permitted for German representatives to participate in international conferences taking place in Israel and for Israeli representatives to participate in international conferences taking place in Germany. The Israeli government also decided to abolish the restriction "apart from Germany" in Israeli passports.

In a letter dated 14 May 1956 the German minister of foreign affairs, Heinrich von Brentano, informed Shinnar of his government's decision in principle to set up in Israel "a liason office" (Dienststelle) having the same format as that of the Israeli delegation in Cologne. He was also informed verbally that it was scheduled to leave for Israel at the end of May.[65]

However, at the end of May Shinnar reported that there was great anxiety in Germany lest the dispatch of the delegation might lead the Arabs to recognise the German Democratic Republic. Sharett replied: "If you encounter a tendency to delay the coming of the delegation, don't argue and don't seek favours, but only point out the responsibility which they are taking upon themselves for the future of our relations, and end the conversation." Sharett added further: "Under no circumstances can we entertain a situation in which Israel entreats Germany to do us a kindness, while the latter refuses or evades…"[66]

Indeed, on 14 May the director-general of the German Foreign Ministry, Walter Hallstein, informed Shinnar that it had been decided "temporarily" to postpone dispatch of the delegation to Israel, for fear that the Soviet Union would exploit the rapprochement between Germany and Israel in its anti-German propaganda in the Arab states, and that they would react to

64. See resolution No. 215 of the government meeting on 15 January 1956 (kept in the Government Secretariat).
65. See No. 150.
66. See No. 245, n. 1.

this by recognising East Germany. Shinnar was told that it was preferable to wait for an opportune moment to establish full diplomatic ties instead of the alternative option of the delegation.[67]

In response Sharett instructed the Israeli representatives abroad to cool their relations with their German counterparts: "we will not publicise anything but we must react at once with a display of coldness [...] we must not offer any explanation, but if they approach and ask what has happened you must say that we have the clear impression that they are not interested in advancing our relations [...] and it is also desirable to hint to loyal friends in the corps that the German behaviour is improper [...] so that they should themselves approach the Germans and ask what has happened between Bonn and Israel, and all this in order that they [German diplomats] should report back to Bonn."[68]

Israel's Relations with Iran and Turkey

In the period under review Israel continued efforts to improve its relations with the two non-Arab Moslem states in the Middle East, Iran and Turkey, Iran recognised Israel de facto in March 1950, and established a mission there in that year. This was closed in July 1951, against the background of Iran's struggle with Britain over oil nationalisation.[69] Iran estimated that this step would garner it support from the Arab states in its struggle. In spite of the severing of relations, in 1954 Israel gained a significant achievement: the national Iranian oil company agreed to sell it fuel.[70] In order to promote relations, in March 1956 Israel sent an unofficial representative to Teheran, Dr. Zvi Doriel, who appeared using the "cover" of a representative of a commercial company named IRIS – the initials of Iran-Israel. The first task he was charged with was to maintain the connection with the national Iranian oil company and to thwart the efforts of the Arab states to sabotage these ties.[71]

Over the years, the Israeli mission in Teheran became to all intents and purposes an embassy, and Iran also opened a mission in Israel, at first in the

67. See No. 247.
68. See No. 264.
69. See *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 6, No. 268, n. 3.
70. On the sale of Iranian oil to Israel, see U. Bialer, "Fuel from Iran – Zvi Doriel's' Mission in Teheran, 1956-1963," in *Iyunim Betkumat Israel: Studies in Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel*, No. 8, pp. 150-180, and No. 9, pp. 128-166 [Hebrew].
71. See No. 135.

framework of the Swiss embassy and afterwards independently. There was a considerable amount of practical content in the relations, in which more was hidden than met the eye. The rise of Khomeini to power in 1979 put an end to these relations.

With Turkey, which recognised Israel de facto in 1950, diplomatic relations were maintained at the legation level. In practical terms relations developed mainly in the economic and trade spheres. At that time the economies of the two states complemented each other: Turkey bought mainly industrial goods from Israel, and sold it agricultural goods.

In the period under review there were some positive developments in relations between the two states: trade relations continued to flourish, Israeli contracting companies won tenders for projects, Turkish journalists who visited Israel (in April) published extremely positive articles from Israel's standpoint. The Turkish prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, who attended a Baghdad Pact conference held in Teheran in April, did not, as was their habit, voice pro-Arab statements. This time Egypt was hurt by the remarks of Prime Minister Menderes, who in his speech to the conference attacked Egypt's opposition to the Baghdad Pact, and claimed that the Nasser government did not represent the Egyptian people, which elicited a sharp reaction in the Egyptian press.[72]

In November 1956, outside the scope of this volume, a serious crisis arose in Turkish-Israeli relations: Egypt exploited the Sinai Campaign in its propaganda against the Iraqi government, claiming that it was the ally of Turkey in the Baghdad Pact, and the latter maintained close ties with Israel, which had attacked Egypt together with Britain and France. In the Turkish government meeting of 24 November 1956 Prime Minister Menderes explained to his ministers that "a sacrifice must be made" in order to save the standing of the Iraqi prime minister – to sever relations with Israel. This statement met with the opposition of the majority of the ministers, and as a compromise it was decided to recall the minister from Tel Aviv.[73] After the Israeli minister left Ankara at the end of his tour of duty in December 1956 the Turkish mission in Israel and the Israeli mission in Ankara were headed by chargés d'affaires until December 1991, when the two states agreed to raise the level of the representation from legations to embassies and to exchange ambassadors.

72. See No. 215.
73. See Fischer to Eytan, 3 December 1956 (in file 130.23/3125/5).

Israel's Relations with the Asian States

In the period under review Israel made efforts, which were unsuccessful, to improve its relations with two important states in Asia: India and the People's Republic of China.

On 27 June the Israeli ambassador in London, Eliahu Elath, met with the Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who came to the British capital on the occasion of the conference of British Commonwealth heads of state. Nehru explained to Elath that because of considerations associated with his country's relations with Pakistan and with the Arab states, there was no possibility of improving India-Israel relations. He failed to respond to the invitation which Ben-Gurion had sent him to visit Israel.[74]

The Israeli ambassador in Moscow, Yosef Avidar, was sent to Peking (Beijing) in order to sound out China's intentions vis-à-vis Israel. On 7 July he met with the Chinese deputy minister of foreign affairs, Chang Hen Fu, who told him that, even though the current circumstances were not ripe for establishing diplomatic relations between China and Israel, he hoped that friendly relations and mutual interests between the two states would continue to develop.[75]

The firmest foothold Israel managed to gain in Asia was in Burma, whose leaders had connections with Israel's leaders in the framework of the Asian Socialist Conference. The person who in particular contributed to the strengthening of ties with Israel was the prime minister of Burma, U Nu, who was the first officiating prime minister to visit Israel (in 1955). Burma saw Israel as an example of democratic socialist development of the economy and society and a state possessing the latest western technology, but without aggressive or imperialistic aspirations, and sought to derive benefit from its experience in the social, economic and scientific spheres.[76]

On 5 March 1956 an economic agreement was signed in Rangoon between Israel and Burma, under which joint enterprises of the two states would be established in Burma, Israeli experts would be sent there, and trainees would come from Burma to Israel for further training.[77] The cooperation in this sphere was an example for other states in Asia and later on also in Africa.

74. See No. 306.
75. See No. 329. For a summary of the developments in China-Israel relations, see No. 52.
76. On Israel-Burma relations see the chapter "Burma-Myanmar" in M. Yager's book *The Long Journey to Asia.*
77. Published in *Reshumot*, *Treaties*, Vol. 7, p. 228, from 12 April 1957.

In June 1956 letters were exchanged between Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Israel, whereby it was agreed in principle to establish diplomatic relations at the level of legations. Agreement was given for the appointment of Yaacov Shimoni, the minister in Rangoon, as non-resident minister in Colombo, but the presentation of his letters of accreditation was delayed for a number of reasons, mainly the Sinai Campaign, and he did so in November 1957. Ceylon delayed the appointment of a non-resident minister to Israel due to its fear of the reaction of the Arab states who were good customers for a certain variety of Ceylonese tea which was not in demand in other states.[78]

Immigration to Israel from East European and North African Countries

Ever since its establishment, the State of Israel had attached great importance to immigration, both for ideological and practical reasons: rescuing Jews from countries where they were in danger, and increasing the population of the State. Consequently immigration aroused opposition in the Arab states, which made efforts to have it stopped, by exerting pressure on the states from which the immigrants came or those which served as transit stations for immigrants on their way to Israel.

Israel undertook to bring in Jews from the lands of distress – Eastern Europe and North Africa – at times in unorthodox ways. Naturally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its overseas missions had collaborators in this field: various government agencies, the Jewish Agency, and Jewish organisations. Therefore the documentation of the subject in this section is only partial.

The emigration policy of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe underwent upheavals, and was influenced by three main factors: a) acknowledgement of the right of Jews to repatriation to their historic homeland; b) internal policy considerations (getting rid of disloyal or undesirable ethnic elements); c) reacting to Israel's diplomatic pressure or to counter-pressure by the Arab states.[79]

To those dealing with the issue in Israel it became clear that there was no possibility of smuggling Jews across the border of the Soviet Union (or its satellites), but there was a possibility of breaking through the Iron Curtain by obtaining permits for the immigration of parents, mainly elderly, in the

78. See No. 306, n. 4.
79. See Y. Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations: From Confrontation to Disruption*, pp. 118-128.

framework of "family reunification" – hence the need to encourage and urge Israelis who had relatives in the Soviet Union to send them "vyzovy" (requests for immigration which made it possible to receive a passport and exit permit). And it was in fact this track which paved the way for large-scale immigration in the course of time.[80]

In 1956 an increase was registered in the number of immigrants from most of the East European countries compared to the previous year; 753 immigrants from the Soviet Union, as against 105; 3,635 immigrants from Poland as against 206; 714 immigrants from Romania as against 235; 999 immigrants from Hungary as against 274. (Yugoslavia and Bulgaria did not impose restrictions on emigration.) Perhaps this increase was caused by the regard of the Soviet Union and its satellites for world public opinion, whose attention had been drawn by Israel to the distress of the Jews of Eastern Europe, mainly through the efforts of the Bar department of Nativ.

The increased immigration, modest as it was, did not escape the attention of the Arab countries which protested to the Soviet Union. According to Arab sources, the Soviets informed the Syrian president that it did not encourage Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern European states, and that Poland had only permitted the emigration of elderly people, and not of people of military age. Poland also conveyed a statement to the Arab League to this effect.[81]

Another region of distress from which Israel wished to bring the Jews was North Africa.

In the final years of French rule immigration from Morocco to Israel proceeded uninterruptedly, in accordance with an agreement obtained in 1949 between the French authorities in Morocco (in coordination with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Zionist federations in France and in Morocco, which permitted the Jewish Agency to set up emigration machinery (known as "Kadima") which would operate discreetly. This body set up a transit camp near Casablanca, from where the immigrants were sent to Israel via Marseilles. In the years of its existence Kadima brought about 90,000 immigrants to Israel.[82]

As the day set for Moroccan independence grew closer, fears about emigration increased. The party in power at the time, Al-Istiqlal, was nationalistic and had close ties with Nasser's Egypt. Israel acted to "avert the evil decree" by activating a number of sources, such as the governments of the United States and France, as well as the World Jewish Congress,

80. See N. Levanon, *"Nativ" was the Code Name*, pp. 137-138 [Hebrew].

81. See No. 427.

82. See M. Laskier, "The Clandestine Aliya from Morocco," *Peamim* 63, Ben-Zvi Institute Publications, p. 135 [Hebrew].

whose leaders were already on good terms with the leaders of Morocco in the days of French rule.

These fears were realised in June 1956, when emigration was officially forbidden. In response to the inquiries of the Israeli ambassador in France, Tsur, he was told by the French that they recognised the right of the Moroccan Jews to emigrate and France was prepared to express this opinion to the Rabat authorities, but they were doubtful about France's influence in Morocco or the ability of the Moroccan government itself to stand up to the pressure of the Arab states. The representative of the World Jewish Congress, A. Easterman, who rushed to Morocco, was informed that the Rabat government did not oppose Jewish emigration, but it was "strongly opposed" to the activity of a "foreign state" within its borders, to propaganda for leaving and to the existence of a kind of "government within a government" which had been introduced by the French regime. Any person wishing to leave could submit a request which the Ministry of the Interior would consider carefully, but collective travel permits would not be issued as Kadima had demanded, and as had been the custom in the past. After an argument Easterman obtained an intermediate solution: a) the Kadima office and its Israeli emissaries would be able to continue to operate for another three months, in the same format as before; b) after this period the office would be closed permanently and a new procedure would be established, better suited to independent Morocco. The intention of the Moroccan authorities was to turn the issue of exit from their country into the individual problem of those wishing to migrate and to oppose the existence of Israeli emigration centers in their country.[83]

After Israel had exerted pressure, with the aid of world public opinion, particularly in the United States, the Moroccan government decided (on 26 July) to permit the exit of some 19,000 immigration candidates who were being accommodated in the transit camp, on condition that they left in secret and without publicity, and that they left in groups of 200 or 300 persons.[84]

In light of these circumstances it was decided in Israel that the immigration in Morocco would proceed clandestinely through a secret Israeli branch which had operated in Morocco since 1955. The branch was codenamed "Hamisgeret" (the framework) and its function was to organise Jewish youth in three North African states for self-defence. An agreement to this effect was signed in September 1956 between Isser Harel, director of the Central Institute for Intelligence and Special Duties, and S. Z. Shragai, the head

83. See No. 286.
84. See No. 354.

of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency.[85] This arrangement remained in force until 1961, when the new king of Morocco, Hassan II, changed the emigration policy.[86] Between 1956 and 1961 some 18,000 Jews immigrated clandestinely from Morocco.

Newly independent Tunisia did not raise any objections to Jews leaving or the activities of the Jewish Agency emissaries, on condition that things were done discreetly. Only in 1960 was the office of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency in Tunis closed.

The Jews of Algeria, who were almost all French citizens under the "Crémieux Decree," did not evince great interest in emigrating, despite their difficult situation, trapped between the hammer and the anvil – between the French on the one side and the Moslem Algerians on the other. After Algeria gained independence in 1962 most of its Jews emigrated to France, while only a tiny number immigrated to Israel.

Israel, the U.N. and the Situation on the Borders

The deterioration of the security situation on the borders between Israel and its neighbours in the period under review led to the intervention of various U.N. bodies: Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, the Security Council, the U.N. observer command in Jerusalem and the mixed armistice commissions.

The secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, visited the Middle East three times: in January, April-May and in July. The first and third visits were at his initiative, whereas the second was in accordance with a Security Council resolution.[87] In his talks with the Israeli leaders, Ben-Gurion and Sharett stressed mainly the need to observe the armistice agreements to the letter and in their entirety by all the sides, while stressing the systematic Arab violation of Article I of these agreements, which forbids the planning or carrying out of hostile acts by one side against the other. They also voiced the demand for the restoration of freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and in the Straits of Tiran. The demand was also raised for the implementation of Article VIII in the armistice agreement with Jordan (freedom of access to Mount Scopus and the Holy Places, opening of the road to Jerusalem in the Latrun enclave, and so on).[88]

85. See I. Harel, *Security and Democracy*, pp. 304-306 [Hebrew].
86. See *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 14, Introduction, p. xli, n. 118.
87. See No. 179.
88. See No. 56.

After his second mission, Hammarskjöld presented a report to the Security Council (U.N. Document S/3596) in which he noted among other things that the Arab states and Israel had undertaken unconditionally to observe the armistice agreements, whilst reserving the right of self-defence. The Security Council decided unanimously to call upon Israel and the Arab states to comply fully with the armistice agreements and to adopt measures to ease the tension. A paragraph calling for a resolution of the Palestine problem to be agreed by all the parties was deleted under pressure from the Arab states (U.N. Document S/3605).[89]

However, the contribution of the U.N. bodies to improving the situation on the borders was minimal. At the beginning of April the situation on the Gaza Strip border worsened. After several bloody incidents Israel responded by shelling the Egyptian outposts in the Strip and the city of Gaza. The Egyptians suffered heavy casualties, including 42 civilians. In response the Egyptians sent irregular forces into Israel which, among other things, killed four yeshiva students whilst they were at prayer in Moshav Shafrir, near Ramle, on the night of 11-12 April. Through the mediation of Hammarskjöld, who, as mentioned above, was staying in the region at the time, a ceasefire was brokered, which came into effect on 14 April, was violated by the Egyptians, came into effect again on 19 April and was again violated by the Egyptians several days later.[90]

On his third visit Hammarskjöld met on 19 and on 21 July with Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir (Myerson) and afterwards left for Jordan and Egypt.

The Israeli leaders raised with him mainly the problem of the deterioration of the situation along the border with Jordan and freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and in the Straits. Ben-Gurion said that he agreed to wait until the diplomatic efforts to stop Jordanian aggression had been exhausted, but if these proved fruitless Israel would be compelled to punish the Jordanian army forces which were organising the aggression against Israel or did not prevent it. Hammarskjöld criticised Israel's reprisal raids and declared that they were ineffective and did not produce the desired results, in addition to the moral aspect. Ben-Gurion replied that the alternative was reprisal raids by Israeli civilians. This alternative was not preferable to organised punitive raids of limited scope. Ben-Gurion also reiterated the demand to convene the special commission in order to implement Article VIII of the armistice agreement with Jordan.

89. See No. 277.
90. See Nos. 181, 184 and 232.

After his visits to Jordan and Egypt, Hammarskjöld wrote to Ben-Gurion that Egypt had promised him to exert its influence on Jordan in order to restore quiet on its border with Israel. He had received a similar promise from Jordan as well. He demanded that Israel act with restraint on the border, and Ben-Gurion protested that Hammarskjöld was treating the attacker and the attacked in equal measure.

It transpired that Hammarskjöld had arrived in Cairo on the day that the United States and Britain announced that they were backing out of their commitment to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam. It had thus not been a suitable occasion to raise the subject of the blockade on Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal.[91]

As we have mentioned, in the period under review there was a deterioration along the Israel-Jordan border, in large part due to the dismissal of the British commander of the Arab Legion, Lt. Gen. John B. Glubb. Both regular Jordanian forces as well as irregular forces took part in actions against Israel. There were incidents of murder, mining, provocations along the border, disturbance of land cultivation inside Israel, and also attacks initiated by the Jordanian army. In response Israel carried out reprisal raids, mainly against Jordanian police stations in the Hebron and Bethlehem areas. The most prominent of the reprisal raids was that on the Qalqiliya police station on the night of 10-11 October, an operation which went awry and almost caused a clash between the armies of Israel and Britain. Israel came to the conclusion that the system of reprisal raids was ineffective.[92]

In general quiet prevailed on the border with Syria, apart from a serious incident on 4 March: an Israeli police boat which was on a routine patrol on the north-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias ran aground. The Syrians opened fire on the boat and on others that came to rescue it. Four Israeli policemen were wounded in the shooting. The Syrians crossed the border and dragged the boat with the wounded in it to their positions. All of them died of their wounds, and their bodies were returned to Israel several days later.[93]

The border with Lebanon was generally quiet, apart from several attacks by gangs originating from Lebanese territory.[94]

91. See Nos. 344, 348 and 357.
92. See No. 476.
93. See No. 125, n.1.
94. See *Government Year-Book, 5717* (1956), p. 238.

Israel and the Crisis over the Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company: Towards the Sinai Campaign

On 26 July Nasser made a speech in Alexandria on the occasion of "Revolution Day." In his speech he announced his government's decision to nationalise the Suez Canal Company, and added that Egypt would use the revenue obtained to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam, after the United States had reneged on its promise to fund the construction.

Britain and France, the main victims of this step, took measures on two planes: the military and the political. The British prime minister, Eden, wanted to launch a military operation immediately, but this did not take place because of opposition from the army commanders. As an alternative, joint British-French planning began for a war against Egypt, to be limited as far as possible, in order to bring down Nasser and his regime and to bring about international control of the Suez Canal. This operation was given the code-name "Musketeer."[95]

On the political plane, three conferences were convened in London (in August, September and October) to which states were invited who were liable to be harmed by the nationalisation, with the aim of establishing an international body which would coordinate their positions and create pressure to compel Nasser to retract his measure. The first conference sent a delegation to Cairo to persuade Nasser to agree to the setting up of an international agency to operate the canal, but the latter refused. The second conference decided on the setting up of the "Suez Canal Users' Association," and the third conference fixed the institutions of this body and its officials. However, Britain and France were at odds with the United States over the Association. The United States wanted it in order to thwart the bellicose intentions of France and Britain, whereas the two of them saw the political effort as part of a process whose aim was to make Nasser back down from nationalisation. From their standpoint the Association was only one of the tools in the struggle; the other was military action.[96]

As a final diplomatic measure Britain and France brought the issue for debate before the Security Council. Egypt also requested such a debate. The debate began on 5 October and ended on 14 October without results.

Israel's response to the nationalisation of the Canal Company was a cautious one: its representatives abroad were instructed to avoid making public statements, and to avoid anything that might weaken a head-on collision between Egypt and the West by accentuating the Israeli factor and

95. See Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, pp. 72-99.
96. See ibid., pp. 37-56.

any nuance that might embroil Israel with the Soviet Union.[97] Israel failed in its attempts to be accepted as a partner in the first London conference, although it argued that it was situated in close proximity to the Canal, and that the Egyptian blockade reinforced the need for its participation in the conference. This was also the case with its attempts to participate in the Security Council debates.[98] In fact, the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company with regard to Israel changed nothing, since the Egyptian blockade had been in force already since its establishment. The nations of the world, which had not lifted a finger to help Israel break the blockade, were in no hurry to include it in their struggle against nationalisation, for fear that this would aggravate still further their relations with Egypt and the rest of the Arab states. However, with the failure of diplomatic efforts and the realisation that war was inevitable, Israel's name emerged as a factor capable of supplying the casus belli. France, whose defence establishment maintained close ties with that of Israel, decided to inform Israel what was going on. This happened (in September) at a meeting between Minister of Defence Bourgès-Maunoury and Peres, who was in Paris at that time. The French minister told Peres that his government was ready to act against Nasser, with the knowledge and agreement of the British. The French wanted Israel's cooperation, this too with British consent. He added that the latter had made their consent conditional on Israel not attacking Jordan. The minister asked that an Israeli delegation, headed by a minister, should come to France in order to discuss cooperation in the campaign. On his return to Israel Peres reported on his conversation to Ben-Gurion, who raised the subject for discussion with a group of ministers on 25 September. It was decided to send a delegation to France chaired by Golda Meir and comprising the minister of transport, Moshe Carmel, Chief of Staff Dayan, and the director-general of the Ministry of Defence, Peres.[99]

Before the delegation left, Ben-Gurion gave Meir instructions whose main thrust was that Israel should not initiate action alone and that it would participate only with the consent of Britain. The latter must guarantee that Iraq and Jordan would not open a second front against Israel. Israel considered it necessary that the operation be carried out with the knowledge of the United States.[100]

The talks with the French were conducted in St. Germain, near Paris, on 30 September and 1 October. It turned out that, contrary to Israel's desire for a simultaneous French-Israeli action, the French saw Israel's action as

97. See No. 356.
98. See Nos. 369 and 435.
99. See No. 442.
100. See ibid.

a pretext for their entry into battle. It also transpired that France was not willing to go to war without Britain. After lengthy discussions it was agreed that France would supply Israel with arms in addition to those it had already supplied, and that the deputy chief of staff, General Maurice Challe, would leave for Israel at the head of a delegation to examine on the spot what Israel could do to render assistance to France in the joint campaign. This delegation visited Israel on 3-4 October.[101]

After the disappointing outcome of the Security Council debates, on 16 October the heads of the British and French delegations and their ministers of foreign affairs met in Paris, and decided in principle to go to war against Egypt, with Israel supplying the pretext. Their intention was that Israel should launch a full-scale attack in the Sinai Peninsula. In response Britain and France would issue an identical ultimatum to Israel and Egypt, demanding that they retreat 10 miles from the Canal in order for the Anglo-French forces to take up positions in the region to be evacuated, to protect shipping. In the event that the Egyptians did not heed the ultimatum, the allies, after 72 hours, would launch an aerial bombardment against it. Britain demanded that Israel's action should not involve a prior agreement, in which it had a hand. In their view, it was necessary to make sure that Britain was "surprised" by Israel's initiative, in order for it to appear to the Arab world as though it was acting to counter "Israel's aggression." Britain also insisted on non-cooperation, even indirect, with Israel since the defeat of Nasser was in its eyes a necessary step towards reasserting its standing in the Middle East, and cooperation with Israel was liable to ruin this opportunity.[102] French soundings of Israel revealed that the latter was not keen to take upon itself the role of aggressor and to go it alone in the battle for 72 hours.[103] Consequently, French Prime Minister Guy Mollet invited Ben-Gurion to Paris for high level talks among the parties involved.

These talks took place in Sèvres, near Paris, between 22 and 24 October. In contrast to the relations of trust and friendship prevailing between France and Israel, relations between the delegations of Britain and Israel were marked by mistrust and suspicion. A tense conversation took place between Ben-Gurion and British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd, who demanded that Israel launch a full-scale military action in Sinai which would represent a real danger to the Canal, without it appearing that Britain had prompted the action or that it had been coordinated with it. Ben-Gurion rejected this

101. See Golani, pp. 77-87.
102. M. Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 227-229.
103. See ibid., pp. 228-232

demand, and suggested action on a limited scale, a suggestion rejected by Lloyd.[104]

After prolonged negotiations in which the French acted as mediators, a compromise was reached, as reflected in the conclusions of the meeting (the Sèvres protocol): it was decided that on 29 October the Israeli forces would launch a large-scale offensive against the Egyptian forces. After this, Britain and France would contact Egypt and Israel with a demand for a ceasefire and for the retreat of the forces to a distance of 10 miles from the Canal. If the Egyptian government refused, on 31 October the Anglo-French forces would attack the Egyptian forces. Israel also undertook not to attack Jordan during the campaign, and Britain for its part undertook not to come to the assistance of Jordan if it were to attack Israel.[105]

Before the battle, on the night of 24-25 October, Israel began a major mobilisation of reservists. This did not escape the notice of the United States which at the time was holding a dialogue with Israel in connection with the British-Iraqi-Jordanian plan for the entry of an Iraqi army into Jordan.[106] On 15 October Dulles had told Eban that the dangers in the region, which had led the United States to approve the plan, still existed. The United States believed that for the good of Israel, and also United States interests, it was necessary to prevent the disintegration of Jordan and Egyptian penetration of it. Dulles delivered a message from President Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion which said, after several expressions of friendship for Israel, that the president knew that the situation in the Middle East was volatile and tense and understood that Israel was sensitive to pressure. He expressed the hope that the situation would not worsen and that action would not be taken which would put Israel in the wrong and would place the United States in a difficult position.[107]

Ben-Gurion's reply (dated 20 October) states that he shares the president's desire for friendship between the two states and asks him to exert his influence in order to prevent the entry of an Iraqi army into Jordan, endangering Israel's security.[108]

104. See ibid, pp. 235-237.

105. See No. 500.

106. Ambassador Lawson informed Ben-Gurion about this plan on 1 October. The ambassador gained the impression from his conversation with Ben-Gurion that Israel accepted the plan under certain conditions, but afterwards Israel added restrictive reservations, which meant in practice opposition to the measure. See Nos. 453 and 467.

107. See No. 491.

108. See No. 498.

In his reply of 27 October Eisenhower wrote to Ben-Gurion that an Iraqi army had not yet entered Jordan, and he hoped that Ben-Gurion would see in this a contribution to peace in the region. Referring to the large-scale mobilisation in Israel he expressed the hope that the Israeli government would not take an initiative which would endanger the peace and the friendship between the two states.[109]

Another letter from Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion was handed to him by Ambassador Lawson at their meeting on 28 October (see below). In his letter the president expresses concern about the mobilisation of the reserves in Israel and asks its government to avoid taking steps that would endanger Middle East peace.[110]

On the same date a conversation took place between Dulles and Eban, in which the subject of the mobilisation of the reserves in Israel was raised. Eban, who was not informed about the preparations for the British-French-Israeli operation, responded in the spirit of the statement issued by the Israeli government that day, which said among other things that the resumption of the fedayeen actions by Egypt in the past two weeks, the establishing of the military pact between Egypt, Jordan and Syria, aimed against Israel,[111] the declarations by the rulers of Jordan that their major concern was war against Israel, similar declarations by the rulers of Egypt and Syria, the mobilisation of an Iraqi army on the Jordanian border make it imperative for Israel to mobilise "a number of military reserves as a precaution to ensure the security of the borders and the frontier settlements. In order that Israel should not be confronted with sudden attack without sufficient protection [...] it was necessary to mobilise several reserve regiments [...] to repulse a possible enemy attack."[112]

At the same time Ambassador Lawson requested a meeting with Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion was evasive and the meeting took place only on the evening of that day, after the Israeli government had decided to go to war. At the meeting Ben-Gurion handed over his reply to President Eisenhower's messages (cited above) and this time put the emphasis on "Egypt's aggressive tendencies," and disregarded the president's request to avoid mobilisation of the reserves. When Ambassador Lawson asserted that the president was not concerned about legitimate defensive measures,

109. See No. 507.

110. See No. 508.

111. In the elections held in Jordan on 21 October, anti-Western and pro-Nasserist elements were victorious. Three days later an agreement was signed for the setting up of a joint Egyptian-led command for the armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

112. See No. 509, n. 2.

but about the possibility that non-defensive actions were being planned, Ben-Gurion said that the United States would not need to be concerned if it could succeed in persuading the Arab states to act with restraint. In his report to his superiors Lawson expressed some doubts regarding the credibility of Ben-Gurion's remarks, noting that in his opinion Ben-Gurion was purposely downplaying the size of the mobilisation in Israel. He also noted that the remarks had been very carefully formulated, and that Ben-Gurion had refused to undertake that hostilities would not erupt.[113]

On 29 October, as agreed at the Sèvres conference, the Israeli forces launched an offensive against Egypt which was codenamed "Mivtza [Operation] Kadesh," in contrast to the impression given that Israel's military preparations were directed against Jordan. (The documents relating to this period will be published in Volume 12.) After battles which continued until 5 November, the strength of the Egyptian army was broken, and the I.D.F. took control of all of the Sinai Peninsula (apart from a 15 kilometre wide strip east of the Suez Canal) and the Gaza Strip.

Although Israel was denied the fruits of victory through the pressures of the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Nations, it did win ten years of relative quiet until the Six Day War in 1967, a period which Israel exploited to establish itself both at home and abroad.

Baruch Gilead

113. See No. 510.

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I.D.F. – Israel Defence Forces

Inc. – Incoming text

M.F.A. – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Orig. – Original

Outg. – Outgoing text

Tel. – Telegram

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30	19 January	**E. Elath to the British Commonwealth Division (telegram)** Conversation with Lloyd: Britain-Israel relations, the situation in the Middle East.
31	20 January	**M. Kidron to the President of the Security Council** Breaches of the cease-fire by Egypt in the Nitzana demilitarized zone.
32	20 January	**R. Shiloah to M. Sharett (telegram)** Eban and Shiloah's meetings with Byroade and Russell: appeasement of Nasser, arms to the Middle East.
33	20 January	**E. Elath to M. Sharett (telegram)** Evaluation of his meeting with Lloyd.
34	20 January	**M. Sharett to J. Tsur (telegram)** Proposals to break the political deadlock between Israel and the U.S.S.R.
35	21 January	**Major-General E.L.M. Burns to M. Sharett** Conveys the Security Council resolution on the Lake Tiberias operation and instructions on its implementation.
36	21 January	**M. Sharett to A. Eban (telegram)** Proposal for negotiations with the U.S.S.R. on arms supply to Israel.
37	21 January	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Reservations about the proposal to negotiate with the U.S.S.R. on an arms deal with Israel.
38	21 January	**R. Shiloah to M. Sharett (telegram)** Efforts to acquire arms in the U.S., reservations about the initiative to buy arms from the U.S.S.R.
39	22 January	**G. Rafael to the Minister of Foreign Affairs** Meeting with Hammarskjöld: Rafael's suggestion that the parties to the Middle East dispute publish a declaration renouncing acts of war.
40	22 January	**E. Najar to the Israel Ambassador in Paris** Meeting with Gilbert: the Powers' position in the Middle East dispute.
41	23 January	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Proposes a conversation with Lawson before the meeting with Dulles in order to prompt him to send a telegram to Dulles about arms purchase.
42	23 January	**M. Sharett to the Israel Embassy in Washington (telegram)** Considerations in favour of an approach to the U.S.S.R. to buy arms.

43	23 January	**M. Sharett to M. Kidron (telegram)** Instructs Kidron to meet with the Soviet representative to get further information on the arms deal proposal.
44	23 January	**A. Eban to M. Couve de Murville** The American attitude to the supply of Mystère aircraft to Israel.
45	24 January	**United States Division to the Israel Embassy in Washington (telegram)** Meeting with Lawson: arms supply from the U.S.
46	24 January	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Johnston: Israel's intentions with regard to the water schemes.
47	25 January	**United States Division to the Israel Embassy in Washington (telegram)** Second part of the meeting with Lawson: reasons for arms supply to Israel, criticism of British policy in the Middle East.
48	25 January	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Dulles: arms supply from the U.S.
49	25 January	**Meeting: W. Eytan and Y. Tekoah – Major-General E.L.M. Burns and H. Vigier** Border demarcation in the Nitzana zone.
50	25 January	**J. Tsur to the West European Division (telegram)** Political coordination of the Western Powers' policy in the Middle East; arms supply from France to Israel.
51	25 January	**A. Eshel to L. Kohn** The demand for reparations from East Germany.
52	25 January	**W. Eytan to E. Yoran** China-Israel relations.
53	26 January	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with John Foster Dulles: the dependence of the U.S. position on the arms question on Anderson's mission; meeting with Alan Dulles: does not believe in the sincerity of the Soviet arms initiative.
54	26 January	**M. Sharett to A. Eban (telegram)** Conversations with the President's emissary Anderson.
55	26 January	**A. Levavi to the East European Division (telegram)** Meeting with the Yugoslav foreign minister: Yugoslavia's attitude towards Israel.
56	27 January	**Meeting of the U.N. Secretary-General with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs** Pacification of the Israel-Egypt border; arrangements in the Nitzana demilitarized zone; press release summing up the secretary-general's visit to the Middle East.

72	3 February	**J. Tsur to the West European Division (telegram)** Asks for instructions for possible meetings in France on the occasion of the Three Power consultation in Washington.
73	4 February	**Y. Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)** The director-general's meeting with Burns: discussion of pending cease-fire problems between Israel and Syria.
74	6 February	**United States Division to A. Eban (telegram)** U.S. economic aid to Israel.
75	6 February	**J. Tsur to the West European Division (telegram)** Conversation with Bourguiba: Tunisia's attitude to Israel.
76	7 February	**J. Herzog to A. Eban (telegram)** Anderson's meetings in Israel: Nasser's proposals for negotiations.
77	7 February	**A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)** Meeting with Allen: arms supply to Israel, the Three Power consultations in Washington.
78	7 February	**A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)** Conversation with the French ambassador to Washington: the Three Power consultations.
79	7 February	**S. Kaddar to the East European Division (telegram)** Meeting with Kalicka, head of the Asia Department in the Czech Foreign ministry: the release of Mordechai Oren, immigration from Czechoslovakia, cultural and commercial relations.
80	8 February	**Aide Mémoire by the Headquarters of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization** Suggestion for a settlement of Israel-Syria border disputes.
81	8 February	**J. Tsur to the West European Division (telegram)** Meeting with Roux: the French position in the forthcoming Three Power consultations.
82	8 February	**F.E. Shinnar to the Minister of Foreign Affairs** Meetings in Germany on bilateral relations.
83	10 February	**M. Sharett to A. Eban (telegram)** Arguments for a forthcoming talk with Dulles, evaluation of Dulles' letter to the senators.
84	10 February	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Dulles: arms supply to Israel.
85	10 February	**J. Tsur to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Pineau: the Three Power consultations, arms supply from France, Pineau's evaluation of Nasser's intentions, the French position on the Jordan water scheme.
86	11 February	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meetings in the U.S. with regard to the Johnston Plan and Anderson's mission, arms supply from the U.S.

187	7 April	**S. Bendor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (telegram)** Meeting with Pineau: cancellation of his visit to Israel, arms supply to Israel.
188	8 April	**M. Sharett to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)** Conveys the text of Israel's letter to the Security Council on the incidents in the Gaza Strip.
189	8 April	**A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)** Meeting with Allen: border incidents, arms purchase in Canada and Italy.
190	8 April	**M. Sharett to A. Eban (telegram)** Reply to Eban's reservations on the state of relations between Israel and the U.S.A.
191	10 April	**President Eisenhower to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion** Support for Hammarskjöld's mission and a call to avoid acts of retaliation.
192	10 April	**D. Ben-Gurion to President Eisenhower** Israel's right to self-defence.
193	10 April	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Allen: difficulties in implementation of the American advice to purchase aircraft in Italy and Canada.
194	10 April	**A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)** Meeting with the Canadian ambassador to the U.S.: supply of 24 F-86 aircraft to Israel.
195	11 April	**A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)** Meeting with Dulles: tension along the borders, U.S. efforts to prompt other countries to sell arms to Israel.
196	11 April	**E. Sasson to W. Eytan (telegram)** Arms purchase in Italy.
197	12 April	**A. Eban to the U.S. Secretary of State** Cease-fire violations by Egypt, strengthening Israel's air power.
198	12 April	**E. Elath to M. Sharett (telegram)** British intervention in Israel's request to purchase arms in Canada, British policy in the Middle East.
199	15 April	**Y. Tekoah to the Minister of Foreign Affairs** Criticism of the proposals of U.N.T.S.O. officials to ease the tension.
200	15 April	**G. Rafael to the Minister of Foreign Affairs** Suggestions for conducting negotiations with the U.N. secretary-general.
201	15 April	**J. Herzog to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (telegram)** Lawson's meeting with the prime minister: exerting U.S. pressure on other countries to sell arms to Israel.

202 16 April **J. Tsur to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (telegram)**
Meeting with Guy Mollet: submission of a Note from the prime minister and a discussion of the Middle East situation.

203 17 April **United States Division to the Israel Embassy in Washington (telegram)**
Meeting with Lawson: U.S. pressure on other countries to sell arms to Israel.

204 18 April **G. Rafael to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)**
Sharett and Ben-Gurion's conversations with the U.N. secretary-general: maintenance of the cease-fire.

205 17 April **Editorial Note**
The Declaration by the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Situation in the Middle East, 17 April 1956.

206 18 April **Israel Ambassador in Moscow to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (telegram)**
Evaluation of the U.S.S.R.'s declaration and suggestions for further action.

207 18 April **J. Tsur to M. Sharett and the West European Division (telegram)**
Pineau's misgivings about France's relations with Israel.

208 18 April **Z. Doriel to D. Lewin**
Proposed activity in Iran.

209 19 April **East European Division to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)**
Evaluation of the U.S.S.R.'s declaration on the Middle East.

210 20 April **E. Elath to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs**
Submits Israel's request for arms from Britain.

211 20 April **J. Tsur to M. Sharett (telegram)**
Purchase of Mystère aircraft from France.

212 20 April **Y. Avidar to the East European Division (telegram)**
Israel's demand for reparations from East Germany.

213 23 April **A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)**
Analysis and evaluation of changes in American policy towards Israel.

214 23 April **M. Sharett to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)**
Further comments on the Soviet declaration and suggestions for action.

215 24 April **M. Fischer to President I. Ben-Zvi**
Turkey-Israel relations.

216 24 April **J. Tsur to M. Sharett and the West European Division (telegram)**
Meeting with Pineau: Pineau's complaints about Israeli pressure on him to supply arms to Israel, plans for future supply of arms.

273 2 June **East European Division to the Israel Embassy in Moscow and the Israel Legation in Belgrade (telegram)**
Drafting of the Security Council resolution on the secretary-general's mission: Soviet refusal to support a clause calling for a mutually agreed solution to the Palestine question.

274 3 June **Aide Mémoire by the Israel Ambassador in the U.S. to the U.S. Deputy Under-Secretary of State**
The situation in the Middle East, Israel's arms request.

275 3 June **A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)**
The U.S initiative to promote water schemes in the Middle East.

276 3 June **J. Tsur to M. Sharett (telegram)**
Difficulties in immigration from Morocco.

277 4 June **Editorial Note**
The Security Council Resolution on the Secretary-General's Mission to the Middle East, 4 June 1956.

278 4 June **A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)**
Evaluation of the Security Council resolution.

279 4 June **A. Chelouche to the East European Division**
Meeting with Solod: Soviet policy in the Middle East and towards Israel.

280 4 June **W. Eytan to the East European Division (telegram)**
Meeting with the Czech deputy foreign minister: Czech-Israel relations, the release of Oren.

281 6 June **M. Kidron to the President of the Security Council**
Detention of the *Panagia* at the entrance to the Suez Canal.

282 7 June **J. Tsur to M. Sharett (telegram)**
The French embargo on the export of small arms to the Middle East.

283 7 June **M. Sharett to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (telegram)**
Briefing for meetings in Moscow.

284 8 June **M. Avidan to the East European Division (telegram)**
Meeting between the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Naszkowski: Israel-Polishrelations, immigration from Poland, the situation in the Middle East.

285 9 June **A. Eban to M. Sharett (telegram)**
Meeting with Dulles: arms supply to Israel, Nasser's policy in the Middle East, Israel's request for a loan from the Export-Import Bank.

286 10 June **J. Tsur to M. Sharett**
Difficulties with Jewish emigration from Morocco.

300 20 June **M. Comay to the British Commonwealth Division (telegram)**
Meeting with the Canadian prime minister: Canada's hesitations over the supply of aircraft to Israel.

301 20 June **J. Tsur to G. Myerson (telegram)**
Arrangements for continued Jewish emigration from Morocco.

302 21 June **R. Shiloah to A. Eban (telegram)**
Meeting with Allen: supply of F-86 aircraft from Canada, increase of the grant-in-aid to Israel.

303 22 June **British Commonwealth Division to the Israel Embassy in London (telegram)**
Meeting between the minister of foreign affairs and British Ambassador Nicholls: supply of British arms to Israel, Nasser's political aims.

304 22 June **J. Tsur and S.Z. Shragai to G. Myerson (telegram)**
Situation of Jewish emigration from Morocco.

305 26 June **M. Kidron to W. Eytan (telegram)**
Hammarskjöld's explanations for his wish to visit Israel.

306 27 June **E. Elath to W. Eytan and D. Lewin (telegram)**
Elath's meeting with Nehru: India-Israel relations, Indian mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

307 27 June **West European Division to J. Tsur (telegram)**
Situation report on arms supply to Israel.

308 28 June **M. Kidron to the President of the Security Council**
Detention of the *Panagia* at the entrance to the Suez Canal.

309 28 June **R. Shiloah to J. Herzog (telegram)**
Shiloah's meeting with Allen: report on Pineau's meetings in the U.S., evaluation of Shepilov's visit to the Middle East, Israel's request for the loan and the grant-in-aid.

310 28 June **D. Ben-Gurion to the Minister of Foreign Affairs**
Suggestion for establishing a bloc of small non-aligned countries.

311 29 June **M. Kidron to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
The circumstances and background of the U.N. secretary general's visit to Israel.

312 29 June **Y. Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)**
Meeting of the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs with Burns: the situation on the Jordanian border, implementation of Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement.

313 29 June **East European Division to the Israel Embassy in Moscow (telegram)**
Results of Shepilov's visit to the Middle East.

412 4 September **M. Kidron to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (telegram)**
Meeting with the U.N. secretary-general: supervision of the armistice agreement, his letter to Ben-Gurion.

413 4 September **E. Elath to the British Commonwealth Division (telegram)**
Meeting with Lloyd: arms supply to Israel, the attitude of the British Parliamentary Opposition to the Middle East question.

414 10 September **E. Elath to the British Commonwealth Division (telegram)**
Meeting with Gaitskell: his support for Israel's demand for freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and for arms supply.

415 11 September **A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)**
Meeting with Dulles: the Suez Canal dispute, freedom of navigation for Israel, the loan from the Export-Import Bank, the oil pipeline, border incidents.

416 11 September **West European Division to the Israel Embassy in Paris (telegram)**
Efforts to encourage immigration from Morocco.

417 12 September **D. Hammarskjöld to D. Ben-Gurion**
The armistice "regime."

418 12 September **A. Eban to G. Meir (telegram)**
Meeting with Hammarskjöld: his difficulties in dealing with the Middle East situation.

419 13 September **A. Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Suggestion for improving relations with Hammarskjöld.

420 14 September **A. Liveran to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (telegram)**
The gist of a Note from the secretary-general to the government of Israel.

421 14 September **J. Tsur to A. Lourie and M. Bartur (telegram)**
Meeting with Georges-Picot: the proposal for an oil pipeline from Eilat to Haifa.

422 15 September **Y. Meroz to J. Herzog (telegram)**
Conversation in the Department of State: the Department's warning about deterioration of the border situation.

423 16 September **Israel Embassy in Moscow to the East European Division (telegram)**
Gatherings of Jews at the synagogues for the Day of Atonement services.

424 17 September **M. Shneerson to the Minister of Foreign Affairs**
Meeting with Westlake: establishment of the Suez Canal Users' Association.

425 18 September **British Commonwealth Division and West European Division to the Israel Ambassadors in London and Paris (telegram)**
Instructions to table a demand in Paris and London to co-opt Israel to the Canal Users' group.

466	7 October	**A. Eban to J. F. Dulles** Israel's attendance at the Security Council debate on the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal.
467	7 October	**United States Division to the Israel Missions in Washington, London and Paris (telegram)** The prime minister's meeting with Lawson: entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan.
468	7 October	**D. Ben-Gurion to A. Eban** Complaint over the discriminatory behaviour of Hammarskjöld, reply to Eban's request to thank the U.S. for its assistance in procuring arms.
469	8 October	**A. Eban to G. Rafael (telegram)** Meeting with Lloyd: Israel's attendance at the Security Council debate on the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal.
470	8 October	**Note from the Israel Embassy in Moscow to the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Trade** Development of trade relations with the U.S.S.R. and proposal for a trade agreement.
471	9 October	**United States Division to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (telegram)** Meir's talk with Lawson: Israel's concern over the entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan.
472	9 October	**A. Eban to D. Ben-Gurion (telegram)** Argument over the contribution of the U.S. to Israel's arming.
473	9 October	**E. Najar to the Prime Minister** Meeting between the minister of foreign affairs and the French chargé d'affaires: Israel's position in case of the entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan.
474	9 October	**M. Kidron to G. Rafael (telegram)** The Security Council debate on the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal.
475	9 October	**A. Eban to the United States Division (telegram)** Negotiations with the Export-Import Bank on a loan to Israel.
476	11 October	**Editorial Note** The I.D.F. Operation in Qalqilya.
477	11 October	**Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel Missions Abroad (telegram)** Guidelines for information to the press and foreign ministries about the Qalqilya operation.
478	11 October	**E. Elath to the British Commonwealth Division and J. Tsur (telegram)** Meeting with Kirkpatrick: the Qalqilya operation, entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan.
479	11 October	**A. Eban to G. Rafael (telegram)** Reports from the closed door meetings of the Security Council on the issue of freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal.

SUMMARIES OF HEBREW DOCUMENTS AND NOTES

1. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 1 January 1956

Coded Tel. 51; Outg: 130.09/2347/1

Summary

Sharett informs Tsur that the French Embassy in Washington has not received any instruction to contact the United States concerning the sale of the Mystère planes.[1] He instructs Tsur to ascertain whether the French had approached the Americans or were about to do so. Under the existing circumstances Israel would only receive the planes in a further six months unless the Americans consented to release them before then.[2]

Notes

1. Reference is to the 12 Mystère IVA fighter planes which France agreed to sell to Israel in July 1955. These planes were manufactured in France for NATO with American financing, and consequently the consent of the United States was required in order to sell them to Israel. This arrangement of the manufacture or purchase of equipment and arms for the United States in foreign countries was called off-shore procurement. The sale also required the approval of the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee established under the Tripartite Declaration – see No. 4 and n. 2 there.
2. Tsur replied that he had been informed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the initial American response had been negative, but the French had requested further discussion (See Tsur to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and S. Peres, Tel. 189. 5 January 1956, 130.09/2346/5), see also Nos. 3 and 7.

2. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions in Eastern Europe. 1 January 1956

Coded Tel. 349; Outg: 130.11/2507/3

Summary

The minister of foreign affairs met with the Soviet ambassador, Abramov, and protested to him about Khrushchev's remarks in the Supreme Soviet, in which he accused Israel of conducting an aggressive policy towards its neighbours ever since its establishment.[1] Sharett said that these remarks constituted a distortion of history, since who better than the Soviet Union, which had sharply condemned the Arab aggression against Israel in its first years, knew the true nature of Israel. The minister stressed that Israel expected a reply before the political debate in the Knesset that would take

place the next day. Abramov was extremely embarrassed, replying that he had not yet received any details, and added that if the remarks had been made they were indeed liable to create an unfavourable impression.

Note

1. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).

3. Editorial Note

The Speeches by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Political Debate in the Knesset, 2 January 1956

On 2 January 1956 the Knesset held a political debate, which opened with speeches by the prime minister and minister of defence, David Ben-Gurion, and the minister of foreign affairs, Moshe Sharett. The two speakers totally rejected the possibility of a war initiated by Israel. Ben-Gurion emphasized that the maintenance of peace was preferable to war "which entails destruction for both sides." Israel's goal was peace with its neighbours, but for this the goodwill of both sides was essential. Recently the I.D.F. had been called upon on two occasions – at Nitzana and in Lake Tiberias – to safeguard the integrity of Israel's territory and maritime borders. Although the I.D.F. is an excellent army it cannot defend itself empty-handed. The Czech-Egyptian arms deal had upset the balance of arms. Furthermore, Egypt was receiving British arms as well. This lent a dangerous significance to the threats of the Egyptian rulers against Israel. Israel was entitled to receive defensive weaponry which was not inferior in quality and type to that reaching Egypt. There was one sure way of preventing war in the Middle East, the speedy supply of defensive arms to Israel (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol XIX, pp. 671-677).

Sharett reviewed Israel's efforts to correct the arms balance between itself and the Arab states, especially Egypt. He described the situation Israel had found itself in after the Czech deal as "a danger such as it had not been faced with since the end of the War of Independence." The United States had promised to give "sympathetic consideration" to Israel's arms request, but the decision in principle was slow in coming. Britain had ignored Israel's requests, but had supplied arms to Egypt. In an allusion to France Sharett said that "on the part of certain European states" there was some inclination to accede to Israel's requests, but it must be remembered that they were

bound by Atlantic Treaty obligations. Sharett took issue with Khrushchev's remarks in the Supreme Soviet on 29 December 1955 that "the acts of the State of Israel, which, ever since it came into being, has been threatening its neighbours and pursuing a policy hostile towards them" are deserving of condemnation, and recalled how at the time the Soviets had described the establishment of Israel as "a national liberation movement."

Sharett expressed opposition to the Baghdad Pact and to the possibility that Jordan would join it, to the agreement to give military assistance to Iraq signed by the United States and to the British dispatch of military equipment to Egypt.

Sharett criticised the demands for territorial concessions from Israel voiced by Secretary of State Dulles (in August 1955) and the British prime minister (the Guildhall speech in November 1955), and stated that Israel was not prepared to give up territory. It was inconceivable that Israel should give up Eilat or the continuity of access to it. Israel was also not prepared to allow refugees to return but would be prepared to compensate them for their abandoned property under certain conditions. He emphasised that Israel would wage its struggle by political and not by military means, and "if we struck a little while ago at Syria, we did so in order to repulse and halt continued assaults on our security, on our territorial integrity and our activity within it, and not for any other goal." He concluded by saying that at the time Israel had presented to the United States a plan for a settlement with the Arab states, including concessions it was prepared to make in the fields of economic relations, transport and development, on a basis of reciprocity and peaceful relations. In the framework of an overall settlement Israel was prepared to discuss mutual border adjustments "for the benefit of both sides." It was ready for direct negotiations without prior conditions, but must beware of any "scheme to use the possibility of some progress towards peace as justifying at present the non-fulfillment of our demand for arms" (see ibid., pp. 671-681).

4. J. Herzog (Jerusalem) to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 2 January 1956

Coded Tel. 421; Outg: 130.02/2455/8

Summary

Herzog reports on his conversation with Lawson. He urged him to take action for the release of the 12 Mystères.[1] The release of the planes would have a big psychological impact in Israel, far in excess of its defensive value, and

would also strengthen the government's position against those demanding a preemptive war. Lawson's reply revealed that he was well informed about Israel's purchasing efforts. He asked about the night fighters that Israel had ordered in Britain[3] and about the helicopter deal.[4] He mentioned that in general Israel's requests were brought before the N.E.A.C.C.[2] but added with a wink that there had been oversights. At the same time he added that the retaliatory raid in Lake Tiberias[5] had caused severe shock in the United States. There was a fear that Israel's retaliatory raids would plunge the region into war. He had read in the newspapers about the discussions concerning the body that would henceforth decide about these raids[7]and he wished to comment that it was desirable that the State Department gain the impression that the discussions would take into account all points of view. Meanwhile, he pointed out, there was a kind of embargo until the Security Council concluded its debates about the Lake Tiberias operation.

Herzog replied that Israel did not expect an official announcement by the United States and would be content with an unofficial hint that, with the end of the debate in the Council, France would receive permission. As for the retaliatory raids, Israel could not abandon its frontiers and its rights, and therefore was unable to give a commitment to refrain from such operations. Lawson answered that he understood that under certain circumstances reprisals were unavoidable, but only in those cases clearly involving provocation and aggression by the other side, so that the world at large should also see them as justified. When he (Lawson) saw that this was indeed the case, he would do all in his power to elicit a positive reply from the State Department to Israel's requests.

Notes

1. See No. 1
2. Since 1950 France had generally coordinated the sale of arms to Middle Eastern countries with the United States and Britain, its partners in the Tripartite Declaration of 24 May 1950. This was through a committee called the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee – N.E.A.C.C. This committee comprised a State Department representative and the ambassadors of France and Britain in Washington, and was also known as the "Tripartite Committee." (At the end of 1955 Italy was also co-opted onto this committee which then became "The Committee of Four").
3. Refers to six Meteor night fighters of which Britain approved the sale to Israel; however their handing over was held up due to the Lake Tiberias operation.
4. This matter is unknown.
5. In reaction to Syrian attacks on fishing boats and police boats in Lake Tiberias, on the night of 11-12 December 1955 an I.D.F. unit attacked the system of Syrian posts along the north-eastern sector of the Lake. This was one of the I.D.F.'s biggest reprisal raids up to then, with over 50 Syrian fatalities. The Lake Tiberias incident

was discussed in the Security Council at that time (On the Council's resolution of 19 January – see No. 29).

6. See No. 5.
7. The government meeting on 1 January 1956 discussed among other things the question of which body was authorised to approve military operations outside the borders of the state. The decision reached (which does not appear in the stenographic minutes, but was kept by the government secretary) was couched in the following terms: "It was resolved (by a majority of 10) that the I.D.F. would not initiate a military operation outside the borders of the state except by the decision of the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Affairs which will decide on the matter with the government's approval." See also M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, p. 1332 [Hebrew].
8. No. 5.

5. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 2 January 1956

Coded Tel. IW425; Outg: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Lawson was invited to tea with Sharett who related his impressions from his visit to the United States.[1] He dwelt on his conversation with Dulles in which Sharett dispelled the rumours concerning the supposed change for the better in Nasser's position towards Israel and repeated Israel's opposition to territorial concessions.[2] After that he raised the topic of arms supplies to Israel.[3] He said that he had given instructions to request a meeting with Dulles in order to raise Israel's request again.[4] Lawson suggested that Israel drop the distinction between defensive and offensive weaponry, since the difference is not clear-cut. It would be better to repeat once again in Washington that Israel was requesting arms for its defence and that alone.

Lawson asked for an explanation about the reports in the Israeli press about the military might of the Egyptians and the size of its concentrations on Israel's borders. These reports had aroused serious apprehensions in Cairo, London and Washington. Sharett answered that it was incumbent upon the government to raise the alarm and to warn and prepare the public for potential dangers to Israel. Lawson replied that he understood but feared that such a report would increase tension that was liable to find expression in demands for action that did not fit with the government line.

The conversation ended with a discussion about the situation in Jordan.[5] Sharett explained Israel's opposition to Jordan joining the Baghdad Pact which would mean its military strengthening. However the alternative, that Jordan would join the Egypt-Syria-Saudi alignment, was not to Israel's liking

either. From its point of view the current situation was preferable. Lawson on the other hand said that Jordan's joining the pact would widen the rift among the Arabs, and Jordan might be influenced by the more moderate non-Arab members of the Pact.

Notes

1. Sharett visited the United States and Canada in November-December 1955 on a mission for the U.J.A. and the Israel Bonds Drive. He took advantage of his stay for political talks in both these countries.
2. Sharett's meeting with Dulles took place on 6 December 1955. See transcript of the conversation in file 130.02/2455/8.
3. On 16 November 1955 Eban handed acting Secretary of State Hoover a letter detailing Israel's arms requests from the United States (see Shiloah to Herzog, 16 November 1955, 130.09/2311/4).
4. Eban discussed the subject with Dulles on January 25 (see No. 48). In order to prepare the ground for the conversation Sharett sent a letter to Dulles on 16 January – No. 22.
5. In December 1955 the head of the British Imperial General Staff, General Sir Gerald Templer, visited Jordan. The main topic of his talks was Jordan's joining the Baghdad Pact. Against this background the Jordanian government resigned, and there were violent demonstrations against the plan in Amman, the Old City of Jerusalem and other West Bank towns. In the event, Jordan did not join the pact.

6. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 2 January 1956

Coded Tel. 530; Inc.: 130.09/2321/2

Summary

In a meeting Gazit had with Hadow, the deputy director of the Levant Department in the Foreign Office, the latter told Gazit that Britain was delaying the shipment of arms to Israel because of the Lake Tiberias incident. Among the shipments that had been approved but were delayed were 6 Meteor fighter planes, 200 half-tracks and other items. He promised to release the shipments after the Lake Tiberias affair was over. He added that Britain had refused to approve the sale of Canberra jets. The chances of the supply of Centurion tanks were slim. He said also that the difficulty in approving Israel's request lay in the fact that the Arabs were aware of each shipment to Israel, using it for anti-British propaganda. Regarding the debate in the Security Council,[2] he said that they would support the

resolution condemning Israel. In their view there had not been sufficient provocation on the part of the Syrians in the affair.

Notes

1. In November 1955 Ouragan planes which France had sold to Israel flew via Greece. Due to an error, 4 planes landed in a military airfield instead of in Athens as planned. The ammunition on the planes was confiscated (the flying of ammunition is forbidden by international convention and by Greek law). The Greeks also expressed indignation because the pilots were French. (See the Israeli diplomatic mission in Athens to the West European Division, Tel. 220, 1 December 1955, 130.09/2293/2.)
2. See No. 4 and n. 5 there.
3. See No. 5 and n. 5 there.

7. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 2 January 1956

Coded Tel. IW424; Outg: 130.02/2455/8

Summary

The division reports on the meeting between Tsur and de Margerie.[1] The latter announced that the three foreign ministers had decided in their Paris meeting[3] to halt the shipment of arms to the Middle East until the debate in the Security Council was concluded.[4] Pinay had committed himself in the presence of his colleagues and could not retract. Tsur protested the decision and said that in effect it was a one-sided embargo on Israel. De Margerie promised that the delay was only until the Security Council came to a decision. He also said that as far as he knew the United States did not intend to prevent the supply of arms to Israel after the debate in the Security Council, whatever the resolution arrived at there.

Notes

1. Roland de Margerie, the head of the political-economic section in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. Refers to the ten AMX13 tanks and five hundred bazookas due to be sent from France to Israel at the beginning of January 1956 (see Bendor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 166, 29 December 1955, 130.09/2342/3).
3. John Foster Dulles, the American secretary of state, and Harold Macmillan, the British foreign secretary (until 20 December 1955), were both in Paris in December

1955 to attend a conference of the NATO Council. On this occasion they conferred with their French colleague, Antoine Pinay, on various matters.

4. See No. 4 and n. 5 there.

8. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division and S. Peres. 3 January 1956

Coded Tel. 182; Inc.: 130.02/2455/8

Summary

Tsur talked with Roux[1] about the ban on supplying arms to Israel. From his conversation with de Margerie[2] he had learnt that the ban applied to the transfer of arms to all the states in the Middle East, but now he understood from reports in the press that both Britain and France itself were sending arms to Egypt. Roux said that as far as he knew the ban did in fact apply to Israel alone. Tsur said indignantly that this amounted to a one-sided embargo against Israel and punishing it without regard to the circumstances. He wanted to know whether this signaled a change in France's attitude towards Israel. Roux replied that there was no danger whatever of a change of policy, however it was difficult to verify this because of the elections in France.[3] He promised in any event to consult with his superiors and to give a reply. Tsur asked about the fate of the Mystères and said that according to the reports reaching Israel the Americans had technically given their consent concerning the off-shore framework,[5] but France had also asked for political consent. Roux denied this, saying that they had not yet received agreement on the off-shore transaction. The moment this matter was resolved and the temporary ban because of the Security Council debate was lifted, France would release the planes.[6]

Notes

1. Henri Roux, director of the Department of Africa and the Levant in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. See No. 7.
3. The elections to the National Assembly, which were set for June 1956, were brought forward and held on 2 January 1956. A new government, headed by Guy Mollet, was set up on 31 January.
4. René Massigli, the secretary-general (director-general) of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
5. See No.1 and n. 1 there.

6. On 6 January Tsur cabled that Roux had informed him that the initial response of the Americans concerning the Mystère planes was negative. The French were insistent and asked them to reconsider the matter. It was learnt through the American embassy that the French request had been conveyed to the State Department. The latter replied saying that the matter was political and must be brought to N.E.A.C.C. (the Tripartite Committee). Tsur adds that he finds it hard to resolve the contradictions between the French statement and the information reaching him through the embassy (Tel.189, 5 January 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
7. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).

9. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to Ismail al-Azhari, Prime Minister of Sudan (Khartoum). 3 January 1956

Note

1. This telegram was sent on the occasion of Sudan's gaining independence on 1 January 1956, but remained unanswered.

10. Minister of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Prime Minister. 4 January 1956

Copy: 130/02/2446/11

Summary

Sharett replies to Ben-Gurion's letter[1] in which he demands that the contacts between the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (U.N.T.S.O.) and the Israeli authorities should be conducted by the Ministry of Defence and the I.D.F. and not by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Sharett's opinion it was preferable that the contacts should remain in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Past experience proved that the style and manner of dealing with the U.N. staff suited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in the period when it had dealt with these matters had succeeded in improving considerably the international atmosphere surrounding this sensitive sphere. This procedure also contributed to the effectiveness of communication in armistice matters between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Mission to the U.N., as well as with the U.N. Secretariat and the Security Council. Of course, no position concerning matters on the agenda should be adopted without the knowledge of the minister of defence, and essential matters should be brought to the government.[4]

Notes

1. In File 130.02/2446/11.
2. In February 1955.
3. Arabic:"You left what was as it was."
4. In his diary Sharett writes that his letter to Ben-Gurion had placated him, and "this matter may be considered finished" (See M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, p.1333 [Hebrew]), and in fact the matter remained in the framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

11. Major-General E.L.M. Burns (Jerusalem) to W. Eytan. 5 January 1956

Notes

1. Eytan's letter was cabled by Tekoah to the Israel Mission to the U.N., Tel. 303, 4 January 1956, in File 130.09/2339/6.
2. Hammarskjöld proposed: 1. Completing the demarcation of the international border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine along the western border of the demilitarized zone; 2. Confining the Egyptian positions and checkpoints to west of the western border of the demilitarized zone, and moving the personnel, barriers and mines away from all the positions in the area of the demilitarized zone; 3. At the same time Israel will move away all the barriers and mines, and will limit the Israeli personnel in the demilitarized zone to the residents of Kibbutz Ktsiot and thirty civilian policemen for defending civilian activities. Israel was asked to inform General Burns of its agreement..
3. On this date I.D.F. forces entered the Nitzana area. According to the Israeli statement these forces were due to remain in the area until Egypt evacuated its forces from there. (At the end of September Israel and Egypt agreed to evacuate their forces from the demilitarized zone after Burns had agreed to the Israel police remaining in the area.)
4. In File 130.02/2439/4.
5. The document there.
6. Article VII states that in the territory described as "the western front under Egyptian control" only defensive Egyptian forces would be maintained there, whereas in the territory described as "the western front under Israeli control" only defensive Israeli forces would be kept there. Article VIII states that the El Auja area (Nitzana) will be demilitarized and there will be neither Israeli nor Egyptian military forces in it. The chairman of the Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission and U.N. observers attached to this commission will be responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this condition. (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, pp. 692-693).

12. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 6 January 1956

Coded Tel. 683; Inc.: 130.02/2455/8

Summary

Eban had a conversation with the French ambassador in Washington.[1] The latter asked Eban for clarification concerning Israel's vigorous opposition to the idea of a land bridge between Egypt and Jordan in the Negev.[3] Eban explained that Israel's opposition was absolute and he failed to understand why, if the solution of the Israel-Arab conflict was so essential to the stability of the region as the Americans thought, it was Israel that had to make this significant concession. Eban went on to explain Israel's anxiety over the supply of Soviet arms to the Middle East. According to the information it possessed the supply would be completed by the beginning of the summer. The ambassador was sceptical about this date. In addition, he belittled the military significance of the deal. In his opinion the French Ouragan plane was superior to the Mig, the Egyptians were unable to operate the submarines, and the British tanks that had reached Egypt from Belgium were not dangerous. He further advised not to press the matter of the arms before the end of the debate in the Security Council. In his opinion, after the debate was concluded Israel would realise that the attitude was not at all negative, neither in Paris nor in Washington. In his opinion it was very likely that a coordinated response would be decided upon. In this connection he observed that Israel's air force was likely to be too diversified if it purchased planes from Britain, France and the United States. Eban understood from this that there was disagreement among the powers not only regarding the principle of the supply of arms to Israel but also with regard to the identity of the suppliers.

Notes

1. Maurice Couve de Murville, the French ambassador in Washington.
2. See No. 8 and n. 3 there.
3. In the summer of 1955 discussions were held between the United States and Britain to find a solution to the Arab-Israel conflict. In this context the possibility was considered of ensuring territorial continuity between Egypt and the other Arab states. According to this plan Israel would have to cede to Egypt a triangular-shaped area in the Negev, and its base would serve as the Egypt-Israel border. Israel was also supposed to cede to Jordan a similar area, whose base would serve as the Israel-Jordan border. The apexes of the two triangles were supposed to meet at a certain point, which would be under the sovereignty of the three states – Jordan, Israel and

Egypt – and where a road connecting Jordan and Egypt could pass through, and Israel would have a road to Eilat (See FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. XIV, No. 169).

4. See No. 23 and n. 8 there.
5. See No. 5 and n. 5 there.

13. A. Aroch (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassador in Moscow. 9 January 1956

Copy: 130.11/2507/3

Summary

Aroch reports on the discussion held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning Israel's policy towards the Soviet Union. Serving as a basis for the discussion were the proposals of the ambassador himself,[2] Kaddar's survey,[3] and Tsur's report on his conversation with the Soviet ambassador in Paris, Vinogradov. All the participants in the discussion felt that at this stage they must talk frankly with the Soviet Union, and they all felt that the Tsur-Vinogradov conversation required a follow-up, which should be exploited in order to improve Israel's relations with the Eastern Bloc and to a certain extent also to raise Israel's stature in the eyes of the West. At the conclusion of the discussion the minister summed up the main points as follows:

1. Talks should be held with the Russians.
2. These talks could be held in different places, including Jerusalem and Moscow, but in each place different aspects would be emphasised.
3. The talks would have the nature of clarification of relations.
4. A general briefing would be distributed to Israeli representatives abroad to serve as a guideline in the event of talks not initiated by Israel.[9]
5. At the start of each discussion and wherever it was held, Israel's amazement and anger at Khrushchev's remarks would be mentioned.
6. The Russians should be asked what guarantees they had received from Egypt that the arms it had received would not be used for aggressive aims.
7. The Russians should be told that Israel's decision to approach to the United States was due to the fact that it, together with the two Western powers, had issued the Tripartite Declaration, which gave guarantees for Israel's territorial integrity and the prevention of an arms race.
8. During the talks the Russians should be asked if they were also prepared to give guarantees and what their position would be if Israel were to approach them with regard to arms.

Notes

1. In August 1955 a conference of Israeli representatives in Eastern Europe took place in Berne.
2. Avidar put forward the idea of "putting out some feelers with the Soviets....in order to find out whether and about what they were prepared to talk to us." In his estimation, conditions in Moscow were not favourable for this activity, and a suitable location could be Belgrade (See Avidar to Eytan, 17 October 1955, 130.02/2403/16).
3. In this survey of 4 November 1955 (in File 130.11/2507/3) Kaddar wrote that he did not believe that there could be real friendship between the Soviets and Israel, but many possibilities existed for "reducing the negative element in relations to a minimum."
4. In this conversation Vinogradov recalled the assistance of the Soviet Union for the establishment of Israel and maintained that Israel had disappointed them. "You are acting as if you are in subjection to America." He recommended that Israel strengthen its ties with the Soviet Union whose friendship was open to the whole world (See Tsur to Eytan, 8 December 1955, 130.10/2507/9).
5. In July 1955 a summit conference was held in Geneva with the participation of the president of the United States and the heads of government of the Soviet Union, Britain and France. It was decided that the foreign ministers of these countries should convene in Geneva in October in order to find ways to resolve the following problems: European security, German reunification, disarmament and East-West relations.
6. In the last part of this telegram (Tel. 872, dated 20 December 1955, 130.09/2326/4) Avidar said that he was convinced that "if we could reach a rapprochement with the Soviets... it would not adversely affect our standing in the West but it would perhaps even raise its value and improve our bargaining power."
7. Levavi wrote that it was preferable to act [in international relations] "relying exclusively on our influence in the United States, and to direct all our efforts in every area in complete accord with U.S. aims in inter-bloc policy, thus enhancing our influence." Avidan wrote that he did not believe that Israel would derive any benefit from rapprochement with the Soviets (See Levavi to the East European Division, 14 December 1955, 130.11/2507/3; Avidar to the East European Division, 16 December 1955, ibid).
8. These letters were exchanged in July 1953 on the occasion of the renewal of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, relations that had been severed in February 1953 after the throwing of a bomb at the Soviet legation in Israel (See Vol. 8, Nos. 288, 298). In Sharett's letter the following sentence was included. "Israel will not be a party to any alliance or pact aiming at aggression against the Soviet Union."
9. L. Kohn sent Sharett a record of the meeting, including suggestions for briefing the Israel missions abroad (13 January 1956, in File 130.11/2507/3) and another suggested draft for a cable to the missions abroad and to Ambassador Tsur in advance of the conversation with Vinogradov. Sharett contented himself with initialling the accompanying letter which Kohn attached to the two drafts (20 January 1956, ibid.). Draft of the cable to Tsur – No. 34.
10. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).

14. Editorial Note

Anderson's Mission to the Middle East

Following the speech of Secretary of State Dulles on 26 August 1955, in which he laid stress on searching for ways to achieve stability in the Middle East through the elimination of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the State Department began putting out feelers in Israel, and apparently also in Egypt, to examine possibilities of mediating between them, in order to clarify the positions of the parties and to seek avenues of compromise (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs survey, "The United States and Settling the Israel-Arab Dispute," apparently from the beginning of 1956, in File 130.02/2456/4).

The Egyptian-Czech arms deal (September 1955) made the need to end the Israel-Arab conflict more acute, since it enabled the Soviet Union to penetrate into the Middle East.

The State Department, in conjunction with the C.I.A., began looking for a suitable candidate to send on a mediation mission between Egypt and Israel. On 9 November President Eisenhower approved the recommendation of the acting secretary of state, Hoover, to entrust the task to Robert Anderson, the deputy secretary of defense, until August 1955 (See *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XIV, No. 393).

On 9 January 1956 President Eisenhower signed letters to Nasser and Ben-Gurion introducing Anderson to them. In the letters it stated that he was asking Anderson to discuss with them the major problems facing Egypt, Israel and the Middle East as a whole, and expressed the hope that they would extend assistance to him in order to settle these problems (See ibid., Vol. XV. No. 12).

Anderson first arrived in Egypt on 19 January, and in Israel on 23 January. His mission continued for two months, February and March, and was resumed in August 1956.

15. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 10 January 1956

Coded Tel. 454; Outg.: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

United States Ambassador Lawson was summoned to meet the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs; Herzog was also present. The prime minister said that he was bound to make the ambassador aware of

the seriousness of events on the Egyptian border. Nasser was steadily accumulating arms, both from the Soviet Union and Britain, and these weapons were directed against Israel. He did not conceal his intentions towards Israel and this was expressed in his declarations and in Cairo Radio broadcasts. There was a very real danger of an air attack on Israel. Egypt possessed high altitude and fast planes that could strike Israel's cities and agricultural infrastructure. In the early years of Nasser's regime Israel could have defeated the Egyptian army and had not lacked opportunities to do so, but it had never entertained such ideas. Israel had not attacked because it hoped for peace and still did so. However, if the balance of arms was not assured within a short time it would very likely be too late and there would be an explosion whose outcome could not be foreseen. In answer to Lawson's question whether, if the arms imbalance continued, war was inevitable, Ben-Gurion replied that in that case it was very probable. In reply to Lawson's question as to the basis for the assumption that Nasser would attack, Ben-Gurion replied that this was a logical conclusion in view of the situation and Nasser's own statements. In his estimation, Nasser would attack within six to eight months. He was full of ambition to lead the Arab nations and the African continent, he had a hand in the unrest in Jordan and in the subversion in Iraq, and he believed that he could achieve his goals by defeating Israel in the very near future. In this situation the United States was applying a kind of embargo on Israel, and extending it also to France. How long would this embargo last? Time was pressing for Israel, and even if it received planes from France and the United States it took time for its pilots to be trained.

Lawson asked whether there was no possibility of considering negotiation before the summer. Ben-Gurion answered that he and the minister for foreign affairs were ready for this at all times, did not insist on direct negotiations and did not set prior conditions. Israel also agreed to negotiate in stages, that is to say, cease-fire, implementation of the armistice agreements, and discussions towards a settlement, if the other side was not ready for an overall settlement immediately.

During the conversation the prime minister repeated Israel's demand for arms whilst there was still time, and also touched on the demands of the United States that Israel refrain from reprisal raids. Israel, he said, did not know any other way to protect its citizens, and if the United States military experts knew of another way – let them come forward with suggestions.

Notes

1. This apparently refers to the meeting that was held on 5 December (and not, as written, on 5 September), in which he asked Burns to find out if Egypt was prepared to observe the armistice agreement, or at least to agree to a cease-fire. On 11 December Burns

returned to him empty-handed (See Ben-Gurion's remarks in the political debate in the Knesset, 2 January 1956, *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 673).

2. On 17 November 1955 – see *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XIV, No. 417.
3. This refers to the talks between Britain and Egypt on the evacuation of the British base in the Suez Canal region which took place between April 1953 and October 1954, and which were accompanied from time to time by acts of terrorism against the British army stationed in the region.
4. In the political debate after the speeches of the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs in the Knesset on 2 January – see No. 3 (Editorial Note).
5. In his Guildhall speech – see No. 23, n. 8.
6. See No. 5 and n. 5.
7. Concerning the Lake Tiberias incident – See No. 4 and n. 5 there.
8. See No. 46.
9. On 17 October 1955 a military pact was signed between Egypt and Syria and a unified army command was established. A pact of a similar type was signed on 27 October 1955 between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
10. Theodor Streibert, the director of the United States Information Agency, visited Israel in December 1955 and met with Ben-Gurion (See Herzog to the embassy in Washington, 18 December 1955, 130.09/2319/9).
11. On 9 November 1955 President Eisenhower declared that although the United States had no intention of contributing to the arms race in the Middle East, it was prepared to consider requests for arms needed for defensive purposes.
12. In fact the memorandum was given to Sharett on 16 February 1953. Ben-Gurion conveyed the response to Davis at their meeting on 20 February. On the affair see Vol. 8, Nos. 89, 90 and 97.
13. From September 1951 – See Vol. 6, Editorial Note on p. 593.

16. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 11 January 1956[1]

Copy: 93.02/194/3

Summary

Tsur reports that he had invited Maillard to dinner with the aim of seeking a basic clarification of the policy of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards Israel, particularly in matters of arms purchase. This was due to the fact that lately Israel had felt that the Ministry took a hostile attitude towards the sale of arms to Israel, and that all the delays pointed to Maillard.

Tsur began by clarifying Israel's attitude towards the Baghdad Pact. Israel's negative position was unchanged, as evidenced by the prime minister's remarks in the Knesset on this subject.[3] At the same time Israel was no less opposed to the strengthening of Egypt and it was concerned about what it perceived to be the French line of support for strengthening

Nasser as a counterweight to the Baghdad Pact. Maillard replied that there was no directive in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen Egypt but such a view existed, and this applied mainly to the French ambassador in Cairo, du Chayla.[4] As for himself he felt certain that of all the Arab states Egypt would be the first to make peace with Israel and there was no such hope with regard to Iraq and its satellites. Furthermore, he was increasingly convinced that Egypt did not intend to launch a war against Israel. In any event he asked Tsur to believe him that the concern for the well-being of Israel was a fundamental element of French policy and this position remained unchanged.

From here they went on to discuss the subject of arms. Tsur pointed out that Israel had been adversely affected by the decision to delay the arms shipments until after the conclusion of the Security Council debate on the Lake Tiberias affair. Maillard at once replied that the Israeli attack had adversely affected French interests in that it had strengthened the British position in Syria and exposed Damascus to Iraqi pressure. Because of that it had agreed to the British and American proposal to delay the shipments. In the same breath he promised that the 12 Mystères that Israel had asked for would be handed over, and it had not occurred to them to ask for British or American political approval for this shipment.

As for the remainder of the arms that Israel had requested, he voiced displeasure with the direct contacts between Israel and the French Ministry of Defence and the French prime minister's office. These contacts were not in Israel's interest, because in the final analysis it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that would approve the deals. His department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a whole did not oppose the sale of arms to Israel, but were only concerned about the amount and rate of supply, and he asked himself why it was up to France to supply all the arms to Israel, and thereby to give England a pretext to incite the Arabs against it. Also from a moral point of view he was alarmed by the huge amounts that Israel was requesting.

Tsur replied that Israel's need for arms was a matter of life and death and it had to recruit everyone who was sympathetic with this. Maillard's remarks had confirmed Israel's apprehensions regarding the attitude of the Foreign Ministry to Israel's arms requests. He should know that France's help for Israel would only strengthen France vis-à-vis the Arabs. Maillard agreed and repeated the assertion that there was no intention to reduce the aid being given to Israel, but that there were also political considerations and they must take into account the range of French commitments in the world. He asked that Israel should understand France's limitations.

Tsur notes that Maillard's reservations testify to a desire to find a new direction for French policy in the Middle East whose main thrust would

be an active role in establishing peace and increasing France's political influence. Such a direction was not yet clearly visible, but if a Socialist government came to power, such ideas would certainly figure prominently in its considerations. It was desirable that Israel should also think about such proposals and present ideas in this direction to the French.

Notes

1. Copies also to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to S. Peres, the director-general of the Ministry of Defence, E. Elath, the ambassador in London and Y. Ariel, the minister in Brussels.
2. Maillard argued that Israel's attitude to the Baghdad Pact was not clear (See Najar to Bendor, 28 December 1955, 130.10/2539/16).
3. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
4. Armand de Blanquet du Chayla, the French ambassador in Egypt.
5. See No. 8, n. 4.
6. See for example Tsur's telegram to Eytan and others, Tel. 723, 28 November 1955, 130.09/2346/3.
7. See No. 7, n. 2
8. The reference is to procurement contracts (five in number) signed in July 1955 for the purchase of various arms items. The agreements included a clause enabling the French to break the agreement in special circumstances. The French insisted on absolute secrecy at the time of the signing of the contracts. From the information in the files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it is not clear to which items of weaponry these contracts relate (See Tsur and Peres to Sharett, Tel. 695,19 July 1955; Tsur to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 708, 19 July 1955, both of them in File 130.09/2346/3).
9. The I.D.F. chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Moshe Dayan, visited France in August 1954.

17. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 12 January 1956

Orig.: 130.02/2440/11

Summary

Tekoah writes that there is every indication that an attempt will be made to amend Hammarskjöld's proposals concerning the demilitarized zone in Nitzana.[1] He refers particularly to Kidron's report on the consultation that took place the previous day.[3] In order to foil this attempt he suggests that Israel should come out with a plan of its own, to be presented to Burns and made public before the secretary-general's arrival in the region.[4] In his opinion the plan should be based on the current situation prevailing in the

region and be presented as a first step towards a complete solution. He indicates several basic elements that should appear in the plan: a cease-fire, contact between local commanders, exchange of prisoners,[5] reactivation of the Mixed Armistice Commission and convening a conference according to Article XII[6] that would also include a discussion of the Nitzana question.[8]

Notes

1. See No.11, n. 2.
   The Egyptian position with regard to Hammarskjöld's proposals was: to proposal (a) – all the borders of the demilitarized zone must be demarcated, and not only the western border. To proposals (b) and (c) – Egypt is not prepared to return to the situation prevailing before September 1955 if Israel continues to retain police forces in the demilitarized zone, which Egypt considers to be military forces. Egypt is opposed to the presence of Kibbutz Ktsiot in the region, but if the police force is removed Egypt is prepared to leave the question of the status of the kibbutz pending, to guarantee non-interference with the kibbutz and to limit its three outposts to observation posts. As for its forces between Abou Aougeila-El Qouseima and the international border, Egypt agreed to move them away only if Israel limited its forces in the "defensive area" along the length of the cease-fire line (See Tekoah to the Israel missions abroad, circular 224, 16 November 1955, 130.16/2951/8).
3. In the consultation they discussed among other things the problem of Nitzana in the light of Israel's acceptance of Hammarskjöld's proposals and their rejection by Egypt. They did not reach any conclusions apart from the decision that a way must be found to end the deadlock (See Kidron to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. X927, 10 January 1956, 130.09/2332/12).
4. The secretary-general was due to visit the Middle East during the last week of January 1956.
5. See No. 26.
6. This clause asserts that after the armistice agreement remains in effect for a year after the day of its signing, each of the two parties can demand that the U.N. secretary-general convene a conference of representatives of the two parties in order to reconsider or cancel any of the articles of the agreement, apart from Articles I and II. Participation in this conference will be mandatory on both sides (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, pp. 696-697).
7. This memorandum was not found.
8. In the margins of the document Sharett wrote: "Y[osef] T[ekoah], we will talk [about this]. M[oshe] S[harett]. 12.1.1955."

18. Editorial Note

Israel's Relations with Ethiopia

Israel ascribed great importance to Ethiopia (which also included Eritrea) which lay in a very important strategic area from its point of view: in

proximity to Egypt, on the shore of the Red Sea, and in the vicinity of the Bab el Mandeb Straits. The emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, saw eye to eye with Israel on the danger inherent in Nasser's expansionist aspirations, but was reluctant to recognise Israel. The Arab states, Egypt in particular, exerted heavy pressure on him not to do this. In order to discuss the state of relations between the two states an Israeli delegation was invited to Addis Ababa in November 1955. This delegation held talks with the emperor and the minister of foreign affairs, and it was agreed that the two states would each be represented by consuls general with access to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

19. A. Lourie (Jerusalem) to M. Agagyellew (Jerusalem). 13 January 1956

Notes

1. See Editorial Note above.
2. Ethiopia had a consulate-general in Jerusalem, a legacy from the British Mandatory administration period, although like the other consulates in Jerusalem it did not recognise Israeli control of the city. Therefore it was necessary for the Ethiopian consul-general to submit to the Israeli authorities a letter of credence, whereupon he would receive his exequatur.
3. At the end of February 1956 the Ethiopian consul-general informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had received written approval from the emperor for the understandings which the Israeli delegation to Ethiopia had obtained in November 1955 (See Levin to Eytan, 27 February 1956, 130.02/2414/13).

20. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 15 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA708; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban reviews the situation with regard to Israel's requests to receive arms from the United States.[1] At this moment Israel's request has been frozen, until after the end of the Security Council debates. The deadlock due to the Council debates had encouraged those who opposed Israel's request. An example of this are the Byroade-inspired remarks which appeared in the newspapers, according to which there is a school of thinking in the Administration that seeks to reject Israel's request or at least to defer it until Eden's visit.[5] In such a situation a special effort is required to restore

momentum. To this end he had asked for a meeting with Dulles that will take place after the end of the Council debates. Prior to the meeting they should renew contacts and voice their concern at the conference of Jewish organisations.[7] In order to lay the groundwork for the meeting a number of steps should be taken: in the letter to Dulles, requesting the meeting, he will point out the gravity of the situation; Lawson should be invited for a talk; in the conversation with Dulles a letter should be handed over from the prime minister to the president stressing the paramount importance of Israel's request; if Eban feels during the conversation that there is the danger of a negative decision he will ask for the decision to be postponed until the prime minister comes for a conversation with the president. All of these proposals are based on the assumption that the situation is indeed a fateful one and Israel cannot permit itself to consider American refusal.[9]

Notes

1. See No. 15
2. See No. 22 and n. 4 there.
3. During his visit to the United States Sharett met with Dulles twice, on 21 November and on 6 December 1955.
4. The United States ambassador in Cairo, Byroade, and the assistant under secretary of state in the British Foreign Office for Middle Eastern Affairs, Shuckburgh, arrived in Washington to prepare the Eisenhower-Eden talks.
5. On the Eden visit – see No. 65 (Editorial Note).
6. See No. 48.
7. See No. 57, n. 5.
8. See No. 15 and n.11 there.
9. On the conversation with Dulles, see No. 48.

21. M. Fischer (Ankara) to the West European Division. 15 January 1956

Notes

1. The Middle East Department in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
3. Anatolia Agency, the semi-official Turkish news agency.
4. See No. 65 (Editorial Note).
5. The reference is to the Guildhall programme – see No. 23, n. 8.
6. He hints at Jordan's joining the Baghdad Pact, see No. 5 and n. 5 there.
7. Turkey refused to approve the visit of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, or the visit of the pianist Frank Peleg.

22. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the U.S. Secretary of State (Washington). 16 January 1956

Notes

1. See Dulles to Sharett, 29 December 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XIV, No. 471 (on the date of the letter see note there). The Dulles letter followed a conversation between the two on 6 December and a letter from Sharett on 12 December (See in File 93.03/3071/6). In his letter Sharett brought up the chances of an Israeli-Arab settlement and Israel's arms request to the United States. Dulles's reply said that the Assistant Secretary of State, Allen, had already informed Ambassador Eban that for various reasons, in particular the Lake Tiberias incident, the United States was unable to reach a decision on this issue. As for the conflict, Dulles expressed the hope that the Israeli government would seek ways to solve the problem. He was convinced that the solution of the problem would be of tremendous benefit to Israel, and would remove a threat that was liable to cause concern to all who sought its welfare.
2. Regarding the Lake Tiberias incident.
3. The meeting took place on 26 October 1955. See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1955, 30.02/2456/8.
4. The meeting took place on 31 October 1955. See Eban's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 32, 31 October 1955, 130.09/2310/16.
5. The United States ambassador in Israel confirmed in Dulles' name the receipt of Sharett's letter. He also pointed out that Dulles assumed that in the meantime Sharett had been informed about Eban's conversation with Assistant Secretary of State Allen on 21 January (Eban reported on this conversation that Allen intended to be content with recording Israel's complaint and carefully considering what Eban had told him, see Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 January 1956, 130.09/2311/7), and about Eban's conversation with Dulles on January 25 (No. 48). These conversations reflected the United States position with regard to Israel's arms requests (See Lawson to Sharett, 3 February 1956, 130.02/2414/28).

23. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to E. Elath (London). 17 January 1956

Coded Tel. 425; Outg: 130.09/2321/1

Summary

Sharett conveys to Elath a number of instructions for his anticipated conversation with Lloyd, the new British foreign secretary. Contrary to what was stated in telegram No. 414,[2] which was sent without his knowledge, he is not proposing a personal letter to Lloyd; but since this idea had been

raised, it was worth considering expressing the main points in the form of a message from Sharett, which would be conveyed orally by Elath.

As for to the essential points:

1. Emphasis must be placed on the issue of arms.

2. It must be clarified whether they will supply the arms when the Lake Tiberias affair debate is over in the Security Council.[4]

3. It must be pointed out that Israel has encountered British influence against the sale of arms in France and Sweden,[6] and is concerned about this influence in the United States.

4. Israel's apprehensions must be stressed, as expressed in Sharett's telegram No. 421.[7]

5. Elath must condemn the discriminatory policy of Britain, whose attitude towards the Arabs is not influenced by the absence of peace, whereas it demands that Israel make peace before Britain improves relations with it.

6. They must beware of wishful thinking concerning Nasser's readiness for peace. His whole aim is to extort concessions.

Notes

1. See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 576, 16 January 1956, 130.09/2312/2. In this telegram Elath favours sending a personal message from Sharett to the British secretary of state for foreign affairs.
2. This telegram states that the Foreign Ministry is discussing sending a personal message from Sharett to Lloyd (Tel. 414, 13 January 1956, 130.09/2321/1).
3. The Czech-Egyptian arms deal of September 1955.
4. See No. 6.
5. Elath regularly held conversations with the leader of the Opposition, Gaitskell. In a conversation which took place on 3 January, Gaitskell told him that in a conversation which the Labour delegation had held with Eden the question of Israeli-British relations had been discussed in all its aspects. Gaitskell's impression had been that Eden was not consciously anti-Israel in his aims. With regard to arms, Eden had told Gaitskell that he would discuss the issue during his visit to the United States and would support the United States position on this matter (See Elath to the British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 540, 4 January 1956, 130.02/2457/3).
6. In November 1955 Israel attempted to purchase Vampire jets in Sweden as well as spare parts for the Mustang fighters that Israel had purchased in the past in Sweden.
7. In this telegram (16 January 1956, 130.09/2321/1) Sharett sent instructions for briefing the media, according to which abandoning Israel without arms could push it to "an act of desperation" and if it was attacked by Egypt "it would rise up to wage a war of defence that would ignite a conflagration the like of which the Middle East had never seen."
8. On 9 November 1955 the British Prime Minister, Eden, said in his speech at the Guildhall of the City of London that if an agreement on borders was reached between Israel and its neighbours, Britain, and he felt sure the United States and other powers,

would be prepared to give formal guarantees to the two sides. In order to achieve such an agreement they had to find a compromise between the Arab states, who demanded the 1947 partition borders, and Israel which clung to its current borders. The British Government, and he himself, would be prepared to offer their services to this end.

9. See No. 5, n. 5.

24. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 18 January 1956

Coded Tel. 610; Outg: 130.09/2347/1

Summary

Sharett cables several guidelines for political action and a possible conversation in France.

a. Israel's main task is to obtain arms to deter Egypt. It could be assumed that general equipment that had been ordered would shortly be released but the matter of the 12 Mystères had not yet been settled, and even if Israel received them this did not resolve the problem of its air inferiority.

b. Apart from American and British interference they must be concerned about the reservations of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was fundamentally apprehensive about Israel's Middle East policy. They must act to dispel these apprehensions before the Eisenhower-Eden meeting.[1]

c. They must profit from the fact that Britain and the United States had let the French participate in the embargo against Israel[2] but not in the consultations about their Middle East policy.

d. They must stress Israel's opposition to the Baghdad Pact which is the main cause of the increased tension in the Middle East.

e. France must be asked if it is interested in joining the arms race of the supporters of the Baghdad Pact on the one hand, or those courting Cairo on the other, who were dragging the Middle East into war.

f. The competition between Baghdad and Cairo threatens to destroy the independence of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Israel is interested in their existence as separate bodies. This support represents a point of cooperation between France and Israel.

g. In view of the aforementioned, curbing Nasser is an essential matter for France and it should display courage by supplying arms to Israel.

Notes

1. See No. 65 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 7.
3. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).

25. M. Kidron (New York) to the East European Division. 18 January 1956

Coded Tel. XA961; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Kidron reports that a member of the Soviet mission to the U.N. had made an indirect approach to the Israeli mission and said that if Israel was interested in arms from the Soviet Union it should apply, and approval would be granted. Kidron requests instructions.[3]

Notes

1. The matter is unknown.
2. Yosef Barnea, an Israeli, previously an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had joined the U.N. personnel.
3. For Sharett's response see No. 43.

26. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to D. Ben-Gurion. 18 January 1956

Copy: 130.02/2387/9

Summary

Sharett is opposed to Ben-Gurion's initiative, which he had raised in a conversation with Burns, to explore in Cairo the possibility of exchanging all the Egyptian prisoners held in Israel for the Israeli P.O.W.s plus the Jews sentenced in the Cairo trial.[1] In his opinion the Egyptians will not agree to associate the matter of the prisoners with condemned civilians. Moreover, the matter of the condemned civilians did not come within the province of Burns. In his view a distinction should be made between the two matters. Where the P.O.W.s were concerned it would be preferable not to insist on

the release of prisoners in equal numbers, but rather to the release of all the P.O.W.s in Israeli hands in return for all the P.O.W.s in Egyptian hands. This was the suggestion of the representative of the International Red Cross, who also saw some chance of the release of the condemned civilians if the two issues were dealt with separately.[3]

Notes

1. The meeting took place on 5 December 1955 and for a report on it see Tekoah's telegram to the Israel missions abroad, Circular 304, 6 December 1955, 130.09/2339/5.
2. This refers to Elmore Jackson, the secretary for external affairs of the Quaker organization in the United States. He had visited Israel and Egypt several times in July-December 1955. In Israel he had been given a list of P.O.W.s and prisoners (including the Cairo trial prisoners) whom Israel proposed for an exchange. Jackson brought up the subject in conversations with Nasser, but without result (See Survey "Conversations and contacts to explore the possibility of a settlement between Israel and Egypt, 1949-1955," undated, apparently January 1956, 130.15/3744/5).
3. Ben-Gurion's reply to this letter was not found.

27. E. Ben-Horin (Jerusalem) to M. Gazit (London). 18 January 1956

Copy: 130.15/2565/24

Summary

Ben-Horin reacts to Gazit's letter[1] concerning a conversation he had with the first secretary at the Iranian Embassy in London. For a long time now they have been looking in Israel for any sign that might hint at a change for the better in Iran's attitude to Israel. Such signs had been given in various contacts in Ankara in the diplomatic sphere,[2,3] a representative of the Jewish Agency was operating in a tolerant atmosphere in Teheran, the supply of oil was continuing[5] and also there was an air link to the Far East via Teheran. At the same time there were also discouraging signs, and particularly worrisome was the aggressive speech by the Iranian representative in the debate in the Security Council.[8] All this indicated the need to act, and to foster diplomatic contacts with people who favoured closer relations with Israel. As to the nature of the relationship, Israel's position was that it was prepared to discuss any kind of acceptable representation. This included the establishing of a consulate in Teheran or even a less official representation. Any solution that would give Israel a foothold without the need to play hide

and seek would be acceptable. Therefore Ben-Horin was being asked to continue to maintain his contacts with the first secretary, and also perhaps to urge him to a greater effort to establish relations.[11]

Notes

1. Gazit reported on a number of conversations with the Iranian diplomat Sultan Hussein Sanandaji, in which he said that there would "soon" be a change for the better in Iran's attitude towards Israel. He added that he intended writing on this matter to his superiors. He said that he had gained the impression that Israel would be content initially with establishing a consulate in Teheran, without a reciprocal step by Iran in Israel (See Gazit to the Asia Division, 23 December 1955, 130.109/2565/24).
2. Jamshid Gharib, minister-counsellor at the Iranian embassy in Ankara.
3. Ali Mansour, the Iranian ambassador in Ankara.
4. This refers to the closure of the Iranian representation in Jerusalem in July 1951, see Vol. 6, No. 268, n. 3.
5. On the sale of Iranian oil to Israel see U. Bialer, "Oil from Iran – Zvi Doriel's Mission in Tehran, 1956-1963, *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, No. 8, pp. 150-180, and No. 9, pp. 128-166 [Hebrew].
6. Celal Bayar, president of Turkey 1950-1960.
7. The reference is to "Fedayeen-I-Islam" (those who sacrifice themselves for Islam), an extremist Moslem organisation founded in 1946 and drawing its inspiration from the medieval Order of Assassins. In 1951 its members killed the Prime Minister, Ali Razmara, and in 1965 the Prime Minister, Hasan Ali Mansour. Following these killings the Iranian authorities took decisive action against the organisation and succeeded in stamping it out.
8. The reference is to the speech of the Iranian representative on 12 January 1956 in the Security Council debate on the Lake Tiberias incident. The representative, Djalal Abdoh, threatened sanctions against Israel and demanded that it pay compensation to Syria for the damage it had caused.
9. Gazit reported that Sanandaji told him that in the discussions of the Baghdad Pact Council in November 1955 the prime minister of Iran said that his country was concerned by the absence of peace in the Middle East and was prepared to contribute to the settlement of the conflict (See Gazit to the Asia Division and others, 2 December 1955, 130.09/2569/4).
10. Zvi Doriel took up his post in Iran in March 1956, see also n. 5.
11. Gazit replied that his Iranian colleague had told him that, according to his superiors, ever since Jordan had refused to join the Baghdad Pact there was a fear that the establishment of an Israeli representation in Teheran would be seen as a provocative act; and moreover it was not inconceivable that Jordan was liable to go back on its refusal to join the Pact (See Gazit to the Asia Division, 9 February 1956, 130.09/2565/24).

28. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.[1] 18 January 1956

Coded Tel. 238; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports that according to reports coming from Morocco there is a real danger to immigration and to the security operation there.[2] This was due to the tendency of the local Jews to be servile towards their government. Among other things the demand had been made to remove immigration affairs from the hands of the Israeli emissaries and to entrust them to local Jews, in order to avoid talk about interference by a foreign country. Staff of the Israel embassy in Paris had contacted the World Jewish Congress in France with the aim of strengthening the position of the Zionists and preventing the spread of such states of mind in Morocco. This danger called for discussion between the Congress and the Jewish Agency and for pressure to be applied by American Jewry whose influence in Morocco was considerable. In view of the situation it was a regrettable fact that the Agency too had not kept its commitment to bring over 4,000 Jews a month from Morocco. Immigration in the coming months would stand at 3,000 and the candidates for immigration were liable to despair.[6]

Notes

1. Also sent to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the West European Division, and S. Z. Shragai at the Jewish Agency.
2. On the eve of Morocco's independence, Israel became alarmed about the fate of the Jewish community after the end of French rule. It was decided to set up a self-defence organisation there, and in Algeria and Tunisia as well, which would be based on Jewish youth in these three countries assisted by emissaries from Israel. These emissaries went out to North Africa in mid-1955. The organisation was called "Hamisgeret" ("The Framework").
3. Leon Benzaquen, the minister of posts in the Moroccan Government.
4. Si M'Barak Bekkai, Moroccan prime minister from 7 December 1955.
5. Meir Toledano, the secretary-general of the Moroccan section of the World Jewish Congress, was appointed in February 1956 as financial adviser in the Moroccan embassy in Washington.
6. Sharett replied that there were difficulties in the absorption of immigrants from Morocco. "The more we can slow down the tempo the more we shall ensure a smooth and shock-free continuation" (See Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 621, 22 January 1956, 130.09/2347/1).

29. Editorial Note

The Security Council Resolution on the Lake Tiberias Incident

On 19 January 1956 the Security Council unanimously adopted a draft resolution presented by the three Western Powers concerning the I.D.F. attack on the Syrian positions on the north eastern shore of Lake Tiberias on the night of 11-12 December 1955.

Israel was condemned for its action and warned that if it did not honour its commitments under the Armistice Agreement with Syria, the Security Council would have to discuss additional steps to preserve the peace.

It was further stated in the resolution that there had been Syrian disturbances to Israeli fishing in Lake Tiberias but this did not justify Israel's actions.

The two sides were called upon to honour their commitments in accordance with the Armistice Agreement between them, and to observe the cease-fire line and the demilitarized zone.

The resolution called on the chief of staff of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization, General E. L.M. Burns, to continue with his efforts to improve the situation in the area of Lake Tiberias, and to arrange speedily for the exchange of prisoners between the sides.

The resolution was given the number S/3538.

For the full text of the resolution see Main Volume, pp. 47-48.

30. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division.[1] 19 January 1956

Coded Tel. 594; Inc.: 130.09/2321/2

Summary

Elath reports on his conversation with Foreign Secretary Lloyd. He began by saying that he had come to explain Israel's position before the British-American meeting in Washington.[2] He proceeded to outline this position as follows:

1. Supply of arms – preventing Israel from receiving arms would bring the war closer. 2. Absolute opposition was expressed to Eden's proposals in the Guildhall Plan.[3] He added in this connection that Israel rejected absolutely any attempt on the part of Britain to pressure it to accept this plan. 3. He criticised Britain's regional policy which was far from achieving its goals and represented a danger to Israel. 4. He explained Israel's policy and its

aspirations for peace. He ended by saying that it was not Israel's intention to exacerbate the West's relations with Russia or with the Arab states, but nor would it consent to be a victim of a conspiracy.

Lloyd listened and took notes, and after that replied: 1. Britain had never taken a decision to halt the supply of arms to Israel completely. They believed that it was Israel's right to receive defensive arms, but the Lake Tiberias operation was a hindrance. They recognise the fact that a change had taken place in the balance of power to the detriment of Israel because of the supply to Egypt and this question would be one of the principal subjects discussed at the conference in Washington. 2. Britain had no intention of exerting pressure on Israel to compel it to accept British mediation. It was not true that they had a plan, and Eden's Guildhall speech was a description of the situation, without adopting a stand. Lloyd personally believes that without admitting a certain number of refugees there would be no chances of a settlement with the Arabs. It seems to him also that without mediation the Israelis and the Arabs will not reach a settlement. 3. He believes that the Tripartite Declaration should be reinforced, and this would be one of the subjects discussed in Washington. Here Elath commented that Britain had violated a principal clause in the Declaration regarding the supply of arms.[5] Lloyd replied that he did not agree with this assertion of Elath.

Lloyd ended by saying that Britain had no sinister intentions against Israel and did not intend to achieve its aims in the region at Israel's expense.

Notes

1. Copies also to the minister of foreign affairs, the director-general and Gideon Rafael.
2. The Eisenhower-Eden talks in Washington in January 1956, see No. 65 (Editorial Note).
3. See No. 23, n. 8.
4. See No. 5 and n. 5 there.
5. The Tripartite Declaration mentions among other things the intention of the Powers to supply arms to the Middle Eastern states after these states promise that the arms will not be exploited for aggression against other states.

31. M. Kidron [New York] to the President of the Security Council. 20 January 1956

Notes

1. See letter dated 3 November 1955 from the representative of Egypt to the President of the Security Council, U.N. Document S/3456.

2. See letter dated 1 November 1955 from the representative of Israel to the President of the Security Council, U.N. Document S/3454.
3. On this affair see Vol. 8, No. 401, n. 2.

32. R. Shiloah (Washington) to M. Sharett. 20 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA725; Outg.:93.01/2213/7

Summary

Shiloah reports on two conversations: the first which he and the ambassador had with Byroade,[1] and the second his alone with Russell. In the conversation with Byroade, the latter reiterated his opinion that Nasser sought peace and that his intentions were good. He spoke out vigorously against giving American weapons to Israel, which would drive Nasser into the arms of the Russians. The only solution was peace, and this would come about only if Israel gave up a large tract in the Negev. He did not hold out much hope for the Anderson mission even though he was an outstanding man, since Israel had no intention of making the requisite territorial concessions. He said that he saw it incumbent upon himself to make his views known publicly since the Egyptian position was not known whereas the Israeli claim was sufficiently well known.

In the conversation with Russell, Shiloah complained about Byroade's activity that was liable to doom the Anderson mission.[2] Russell replied that Byroade did not reflect the State Department's position. He confided that Byroade's invitation to Washington was designed to keep him away from Cairo for fear that he might cause the Anderson mediation to fail. As for Israel's request for arms, he reiterated the familiar arguments about the Lake Tiberias incident and added that dealing with the matter during the Anderson mission might raise a storm and sabotage the mission. He believed that if the mission failed they would need to give arms to Israel so that it could withstand a sudden attack and hold out until outside help arrived. Such help had to be given in the framework of contracts and security arrangements, and this would mean dividing the Middle East into two blocs: an Arab bloc backed by the Soviets and Israel backed by the West. This was a grave and dangerous development and must be avoided until the search for the chance of peace had been exhausted. Anderson had set himself a period of a month to assess the chances for a settlement, and during this month Israel must not do anything to sabotage his mission. He noted that this was his personal position and he did not know the positions of the president and the secretary of state.

Notes

1. See No. 20 and n. 4 there.
2. Robert Anderson, see No.14 (Editorial Note).
3. On 16 January Nasser announced the granting of a new constitution for Egypt. In his speech he also said: "We shall fight for Arab freedom from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. We shall fight united for freedom. We shall fight against imperialism" (See *Jerusalem Post*, 17 January 1956).
4. The Anderson mission.

33. E. Elath (London) to M. Sharett. 20 January 1956

Coded Tel. 596; Inc.: 130.02/2446/4

Summary

Elath adds details and clarifications on his conversation with Lloyd.[3] In the conversation he used Sharett's telegram 430[2] and described the social nature and political stability of Israel as compared with the Arab states, but he had not overly developed this subject since he wished to concentrate above all on the subject of arms. His impression was that his remarks about a strong Israel as a support for British policy in the region had not particularly impressed Lloyd. In the past it had been Lloyd who had once commented in a conversation with Elath that the trouble was that the oil and the communication lines in the Middle East were in the hands of the Arabs and not of Israel. On the other hand, he had been impressed by Lloyd's positive attitude with regard to the balance of power in the region, but it was still too early to draw practical conclusions from this. Possibly this was connected with the forthcoming debate in Parliament,[4] and his intention had been to stress that it was not the British government's intention to impose a total ban on the supply of arms to Israel. A further positive point in the conversation was Lloyd's comment regarding the weakness of the Tripartite Declaration and the need to reinforce it.

Notes

1. No. 23.
2. In this telegram Sharett sought to warn against the illusion that perhaps Israel, faced with mortal danger and denied defensive arms, would be prepared for concessions in order to save itself (19 January 1956, 130.09/2321/1).
3. See No. 30.
4. The debate in Parliament was fixed for 24 January in the wake of the "Scrap-Iron Affair" (See n. 6 below). It was the Opposition's intention, in coordination with the

Israeli ambassador, not to be content with a debate on this affair only, but also to raise the subject of the balance of arms in the Middle East (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 607, 21 January 1956, 130.09/2321/2). In fact the leader of the Opposition, Gaitskell, did keep his word in this debate with regard to Israel's demand for defensive arms without conditions (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 670, 24 January 1956, ibid.).

5. On this meeting see No. 23 and n. 5 there.
6. In December 1955–January 1956 articles appeared in the British press according to which British Army surplus military equipment, especially tanks of the Valentine type, were exported as scrap-iron to Belgium where they were refurbished and transferred to Egypt. The Opposition demanded explanations, and in fact on 19 January a White Paper (Cmd9676) was published which reviewed the export of British military equipment surpluses from 1945 onwards. In the publication it states that 151 old Valentine-type tanks were exported to Belgium and transferred to Egypt, and 50 to 100 Sherman tanks were exported to France and from there transferred to Israel. It was argued that these arms did not upset the Middle East arms balance. Government spokesmen spoke in a similar vein in the Parliamentary debate on 24 January (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 680, 25 January 1956, 130.09/2321/2).
7. Israel requested tanks from Britain at the beginning of January 1956 but the embassy official in London was told that the chances of obtaining them were negligible (See No. 6).
8. The text of Elath's announcement to the press has not been found. In any event, the British were furious since the announcement was not coordinated with them, and they were particularly incensed by the fact that it said that Elath had accused Britain in his conversation with Lloyd of "systematic evasion" of its commitment to treat Israel as an absolute equal with the Arab states, since this expression had not been uttered in the conversation with Lloyd. Elath was summoned for a clarification with the permanent under-secretary of the British Foreign Office, Kirkpatrick, and told him that the expression "systematic evasion" rendered faithfully what he had said to Lloyd when he had voiced criticism of discrimination in supplying arms to Israel. Elath expressed his regret that he had not informed Lloyd in advance of his intention to publish the announcement, but vigorously reiterated the content of the announcement itself (See Elath to Sharett, Tel. 601, 20 January 1956, 130.09/2321/2). On the reaction of the British press to the affair, see Elath to Sharett, Tel. 606, 22 January 1956, 130.02/2455/8).

34. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 20 January 1956

Draft telegram; Copy: 130.02/2418/3

Summary

Sharett suggests attempting to make contact with the Russians[1] through a meeting between Tsur and Vinogradov, as a follow-up to their conversation

of 6 December.[2] He instructs Tsur to invite him to a meeting and in the course of it to express a desire to contribute to ironing out differences and strengthening ties between the two states. He should tell him that Israel was formulating instructions for further talks with the Russians but in the meantime things had happened that cast a shadow over relations, such as Khrushchev's harmful speech[3] and the stand adopted by the Soviet Union in the Security Council debate.[4] Sharett instructs Tsur not to go beyond this, but if Vinogradov asks what subjects Israel wishes to discuss, he should raise such topics as the Baghdad Pact, guarantees for preserving the current territorial situation in the Middle East, the strengthening of cultural and trade relations, and activating Israel's friends in the world to ease international tension in keeping with the spirit of Geneva.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 13.
2. See ibid, n. 4.
3. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
4. In the Security Council debate on Israel's Lake Tiberias operation.
5. Tsur was only given the opportunity to meet with Vinogradov in April – See No. 183.

35. Major-General E.L.M. Burns (Jerusalem) to M. Sharett. 21 January 1956

Note

1. See No. 29 (Editorial Note).

36. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 21 January 1956

Coded Tel. 511; Outg: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

Sharett cables that the Soviet approach concerning the supply of arms to Israel was of crucial importance.[1] If the forthcoming conversation with Dulles did not yield anything, Eban should talk with the Soviet representative. The fact that the Soviets had made the approach removed the fear that they would reply negatively to a request for a meeting. There remained of course the

fear of a political reaction from the United States. In his estimation, they did not have to fear such a reaction since he himself had said in Israel and abroad that Israel had no choice but to appeal to every source. The prime minister agrees to approach the Soviets. Sharett's question to Eban was whether it was not worth bringing to the notice of the Americans that Israel had such opportunities with the Soviet Union. In any case, he believed that Eban should not say this to Dulles himself, as he was liable to seize upon any new pretext not to approve Israel's request.[4]

Notes

1. No. 25.
2. No. 48.
3. No. 22.
4. Eban's reply – See No. 37.

37. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 21 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA728; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban refers to Sharett's directive[1] with regard to an approach to the Soviet representative. He expresses doubt as to the benefit of such a meeting and doubts if there is any real chance to get arms from the Eastern bloc. On the other hand, such a meeting was liable to endanger relations with the West. He therefore advises not to say anything explicit to the Americans, apart from a hint, in a conversation with Allen Dulles,[4] that in the vacuum that had been created other ideas and possibilities had begun to surface. He assumed that Allen Dulles would hurry to tell his brother. Essentially, he believed that only if it became clear that nothing at all was to be expected from the Westerners would there be any point in approaching the Russians. In his opinion Israel had not yet reached that point.[5]

Notes

1. No. 36.
2. Eban was told during the conversation with the Soviets that independence meant not establishing Western bases on Israeli soil. The issue of Soviet arms supply to Israel was not raised (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 420, 17 October 1955, 130.09/2311/4).

3. Katz-Suchy's remarks were vague: he assumes that Czechoslovakia would be prepared to supply arms to any country that did not join an anti-Soviet pact, including Israel (See Kidron to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. XA509, 5 October 1955, 93.01/2183/6).
4. Allen Dulles, director of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, brother of Secretary of State J.F. Dulles.
5. In another telegram Eban gave further reasons against turning to the Soviet Union: it would impose a heavy financial burden on Israel, especially since it was difficult to conceive that Israel would pay for the Soviet arms with money from the United Jewish Appeal and the Bonds money of American Jewry; there was a fear that the Russians were setting a trap, so that Israel would find itself eventually without Western arms and with Soviet arms given according to Arab conditions. His conclusion was that they should exploit the Soviet initiative only to explain to the West how oppressive the delays in approving the arms were (See Eban to Sharett, WIA736, 23 January 1956, 93.01/2213/9).

38. R. Shiloah (Washington) to M. Sharett. 21 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA731; Inc.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Shiloah refers to Sharett's instruction to put out feelers with regard to the supply of arms from the Soviets and to Eban's conversation with Russell.[1,2] In his estimation, based on his personal acquaintance with Russell, the latter would not have said anything unless he knew that this was the frame of mind in the circles of the secretary of state. Therefore Israel should continue to apply pressure on the Administration and avoid any action that would give them an excuse to delay their reply. Consequently, he recommends avoiding contacts with the Soviets with regard to arms.

Notes

1. No. 36.
2. No. 32.
3. Anderson's mission – See No. 13 (Editorial Note).
4. The reference is to Eban and Shiloah's conversation with George Allen, the assistant United States secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs. Eban said that he had come to renew Israel's request for arms, after the affair of the Security Council debate had ended. Allen at first reacted with formality, saying that he would note down Eban's remarks and would tell the secretary. Eban responded forcefully, Allen changed his vein and scheduled a meeting for Eban with the secretary of state for the following week (See Eban to the United States Division, Tel. WIA729, 21 January 1956, 130.09/2311/7).

39. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 22 January 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/3

Summary

Rafael reports on a conversation he had with Hammarskjöld when the latter was making a stopover in Israel on his way to Cairo.[1] Hammarskjöld said that he had not set himself any particular plan of action during his visit except to press the Egyptians to accept his suggestions with regard to Nitzana.[2] It was his intention to feel the pulse with Nasser before deciding if he could do anything to reduce the tension.

Rafael replied that the entire armistice mechanism between Israel and the Arab states had been badly affected because of the continued hostile policy of the Arabs and their refusal to progress towards a final settlement as laid down in the armistice agreements. In his opinion it would be possible to find a way out of the impasse if all the parties signatory to the agreements were to issue a declaration and undertake to honour their commitments, to preserve the territorial integrity of the other side and to stop hostile acts. In the past (1951) the Conciliation Commission had proposed such a formula, but the Arabs had rejected it.[4] Hammarskjöld was enthusiastic and on the spot Rafael drafted three points that must be included in the declaration:

1. Preparedness for a peaceful settlement of all conflicts.
2. Non-use of force against territorial integrity.
3. The cessation of all hostile acts.

Hammarskjöld took this formula with him.[5]

Notes

1. Hammarsjköld was on his way from Turkey to Egypt.
2. See No. 11, n. 2.
3. The conversation took place on 5 December 1955. Sharett reported in brief that it was a "wide-ranging discussion, including arms, Nasser, incidents, reactions, the Eden mediation, Negev, water, Jordan, his appeal to the Russians." See M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, p. 1304 [Hebrew].
4. The formula is on file but was not published here because it appears to include errors.

40. E. Najar (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassador in Paris. 22 January 1956

Orig.: 93.02/193/1

Summary

Najar reports on a meeting with Gilbert.[1] The latter began by saying that he was concerned about the situation. Najar replied that he was also concerned by the last conversation between Maillard and the Israeli ambassador in France, and especially by Maillard's statement asking why France was called upon to supply Israel with everything required for its defence.[2] If this was indeed the state of mind in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs then it was the English who were dictating French policy, and the same considerations that led Britain to withhold arms from Israel were guiding her to undermine France's status. Gilbert replied that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not hostile to Israel and the promised arms would arrive.

Afterwards the conversation proceeded to political matters. Gilbert said that in the consultations between Eisenhower and Eden[4] the English had succeeded in persuading the Americans that before any further political step an immediate and final solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be found. Accordingly, heavy pressures could be expected for concessions and the continuation of the arms embargo would be part of these pressures. Gilbert suggested that Israel should increase its pressure in Washington. Najar replied that the French interest coincided with Israel's since, if there was a change in the territorial status quo in Israel, the turn of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan would follow. France should encourage these states in order to protect their sovereignty. Gilbert agreed with Najar and said that he would write about it to Paris.

Notes

1. Pierre E. Gilbert, French ambassador in Israel.
2. See No. 16.
3. No. 24.
4. See No. 65 (Editorial Note).
5. This refers to an article published in *Life* magazine in January 1956 based on an interview with Secretary of State Dulles. The article stated that the secretary had said that his country had almost gone to the brink of a world war in Korea, in Indo-China and Formosa, but war had been avoided only through a forceful policy, which included in two cases the threat of the use of nuclear weapons (See *Ha'aretz*, 18 January 1956).
6. No. 16.

41. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 23 January 1956

Coded Tel. 740; Outg.: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

Eban suggests an urgent meeting with Lawson so that he should report back before the Eban-Dulles meeting.[1] In the conversation it should be stressed how grave the situation would be if no progress was made in this meeting regarding the arms issue. It was more important that the Americans should reach a decision than that they should make it public. According to indications he had received, the question of the date of the announcement was bothering them more than actually making the decision.[2]

Notes

1. Eban's meeting with Dulles, see No.48.
2. Lawson was in fact invited to see Sharett. See No. 45.

42. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 23 January 1956

Coded Tel. 515; Outg: 130.02/2457/1

Summary

Sharett cables to Eban and Shiloah regarding their messages indicating reservations about the attempt to continue clarifying with the Soviets what lay behind their hints about an arms deal with Israel.[1,2] He reminds them that he had previously declared that Israel would approach any source in order to obtain arms. In the meantime three months had passed since his appeal to Dulles to receive arms, without any response. In his opinion the Soviet message in New York had been an official one, earlier hints had preceded it,[4] and it required a response. In view of Western assertions that the supply of arms to Israel would push the Arabs still further into the arms of the Soviet Union, a positive Soviet reply to Israel would deliver them from this nightmare. Time was running out; he was still waiting, but asked them to give the matter careful consideration.

Notes

1. No. 37.
2. No. 38.
3. No. 25.
4. See No. 13 and n. 4 there.

43. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to M. Kidron (New York). 23 January 1956

Coded Tel. YA967; Inc.: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Sharett instructs Kidron to arrange a meeting between Liveran and Barnea's contact on the subject of arms. He must ask if the offer was an official one, and, if a positive answer was received, he should say that it would be conveyed to its destination. He should add, off the record, that Israel found it hard to understand the Soviets who were supplying arms to both sides, and it would be best to avoid supplying arms at all. Supplying Israel was liable to endanger their standing with the Arabs. It must be asked why, if that was the position, they did not approach Israel through the regular channels, through the Israeli ambassador in Moscow or the Soviet ambassador in Israel.[2]

Notes

1. No. 25.
2. Kidron replied that Liveran had talked with Barnea's interlocutor who was joined by a Soviet expert in international law. The Russian did not repeat the remarks made to Barnea but he did not deny them either. He maintained that those who wished to purchase arms from Czechoslovakia had to get in touch with it. The Czechs sell arms commercially like any other country (See Kidron to Sharett, 24 January 1956, 130.02/2457/15).

44. A. Eban [Washington] to M. Couve de Murville (Washington). 23 January 1956

Notes

1. See No. 38 and n. 4 there.
2. See No. 8.

45. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 24 January 1956

Coded Tel. 521; Outg.: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Lawson was summoned to see the foreign minister. The minister began by saying that he had summoned him urgently in order to let him hear a few things which he hoped would reach the secretary of state before his meeting with Eban.[1] The minister also took the opportunity to give Lawson a copy of his letter to the secretary.[2] The matter of arms, said Sharett, was becoming increasingly urgent. Three months had passed since he had presented Israel's demand and there had been no response. In the meantime arms were flowing to Egypt and Nasser would not hesitate to use them when he felt that he possessed absolute superiority. Israel could not rely on external intervention on its behalf since there was no such commitment, and even if there were, it was unable to guarantee that Israel's cities and towns would not be devastated before it materialised. Israel would soon have to decide where it stood. The United States should act responsibly and not delay its reply. If the United States was apprehensive about the repercussions of its reply, Israel was prepared to accept one that would not be made public and undertook to keep it secret. Israel would also be prepared to accept a reply in the form of a personal promise to be transmitted to the ambassador in Washington or by the ambassador in Israel to the minister of foreign affairs, provided that it was not a promise in principle but a concrete one, encompassing the list that Israel had presented and with a schedule for implementation. At the end of the conversation the minister reiterated that the time for decision had arrived and Israel was entitled to know where it stood. The government's position in Israel would be grave if it turned out that it had deluded itself with a vain hope and that in the meantime precious time had been lost. To be continued.[5]

Notes

1. On 25 January, see No. 48.
2. No. 22.
3. See No. 15 and n.11 there.
4. See No. 29 (Editorial Note).
5. See No. 47.

46. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 24 January 1956

Coded Tel. 750; Inc.: 130.09/2311/7

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Johnston[1] and Barnes[2] regarding the Jordan water scheme. Johnston asked what Israel's plans were, and what would happen after the period of postponement that had been agreed upon.[4] Would Israel proceed to carry out the diversion of the Jordan at the Benot Yaaqov bridge? Had Israel completed all the work outside the demilitarized zone or was it still possible to wait a few months, and was the urgency due to practical considerations or domestic policy considerations? He also asked what Israel thought about the need to remind Nasser of his obligation[5] to give a final decision before the end of February as he had promised Johnston.

Eban replied that he regarded the very questions as troubling. Were it not for the Johnston scheme Israel would have already found a solution to the diversion project, and it was difficult to assume that in light of the Dixon-Eysvoogel report a way out of the deadlock would not have been found.[7] This fact obliged him morally to identify with the renewal of work. The diversion project was also justified in terms of the Johnston plan and the United States had no right whatsoever to demand that it be postponed. He said that he would convey the questions to his government for an official reply.

Eban informed Sharett that he would cable again concerning the whole matter and it was important that he should have an official response from Israel.[8]

Notes

1. Eric Johnston, the chairman of the International Development Advisory Board, arrived in the Middle East in October 1953 as the emissary of President Eisenhower in order to draw up a plan for exploiting the Jordan river waters which would be acceptable to the states concerned, Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In July 1955 he presented his plan to Israel, which accepted it; in October 1955 he presented it to the Arab states; they passed it on to the Arab League which discussed it on 15 October but did not approve the plan (See survey of S. Cahana "The National Water Project and the United States," 14 March 1955, 130.02/3080/2).
2. George A. Barnes, member of the International Development Advisory Board of the Foreign Operations Administration of the United States, Eric Johnston's assistant.
3. Evelyn Shuckburgh, assistant under-secretary of state (deputy director-general) of the British Foreign Office, who was in Eden's entourage at the talks with Eisenhower at the end of January 1956.

4. Sharett told Johnston in October 1955 that Israel was prepared to wait until February 1956 with regard to the resumption of the Jordan diversion work – See No. 62.
The work to divert the Jordan as part of the National Water Carrier Project began on 2 September 1953 in the demilitarized zone, south of the Benot Yaaqov bridge. The plan was to dig a 2.5 km long canal at a distance of 100 metres from the Jordan channel and parallel to it. The water in the canal was supposed to operate a power station north of Lake Tiberias. On 16 October Syria lodged a complaint with the Security Council, and on 27 October Israel announced the suspension of the work, after the United States had held up the grant-in-aid to Israel. The Johnston mission led to the continued suspension of the work.
5 Nasser undertook to bring about removal of the Syrian opposition to the Johnston plan, but did not keep his word.
6. In 1951, see Vol. 6, Companion Volume, p. 80 (Editorial Note).
7. Dixon (from the United States) and Eysvoogel (from the Netherlands) were water experts who visited Israel in March 1954, sent by Hammarskjöld in accordance with the request of the chief of staff of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization, Bennike Their task was to examine the implications of the diversion of the Jordan in the Benot Yaaqov bridge region on the water and territorial rights of the Arabs in the Butheiha valley on the shore of Lake Tiberias. After they visited the area and met with Israeli and Syrian water experts they submitted a report on 3 April 1954, from which it emerged that the rights would not be affected (Reports on their meetings in Israel in File 130.02/3688/9). For their main recommendations see Vol. 9, No. 241, and n.1 there.
8. See No. 62.

47. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 25 January 1956

Coded Tel. IWA522; Outg.: 130.02/2455/8

Summary

Addenda to the foreign minister's conversation with Lawson.[1] Sharett took issue with Byroade's argument that the supply of arms to Israel would push Egypt still further towards the Soviet Union. This was an unfair and immoral argument which exploited the fact that Israel had tied its destiny to the West. It was a fact that the United States was supplying arms to different states without fearing that other states would draw closer to the Soviets. He also mentioned the rumour that Eden would demand that the president make his approval of the arms request conditional on Israel's readiness for significant concessions. Israel would oppose this plot with all its might and would not give ground under pressure and threat. In reply to the ambassador's observation to the effect that there appeared to be some relaxation in public opinion over the arms affair, Sharett explained that the public still hoped for

a positive response, particularly after the conclusion of the Security Council debate on the Lake Tiberias incident.

Notes

1. No. 45.
2. At their meeting in Washington at the end of January 1956. See No. 65.
3. Refers to General Templer's mission to Jordan. See No. 5, n. 5.

48. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 25 January 1956

Coded Tel. 756; Inc.: 130.09/2311/7

Summary

Eban reports on his talk with Dulles, which lasted 40 minutes, and which was rushed in the end because the secretary of state had to hurry away to the White House for a reception.

Eban began by warning about the time that was passing and the lack of a decision; meanwhile Egypt was arming itself. Israel had to know where it stood in order to consider its steps on the basis of a clear knowledge of the situation. It was more important to get an actual positive response today than a ringing declaration, and here he brought up the minister of foreign affair's remarks to Lawson.[3]

In his reply the secretary said that the preservation of Israel in all its essentials was a central aim of the policy of the United States government. The introduction of the Russian factor into the region obliged the Administration to undertake a review of ways to guarantee Israel's existence. Talks with Eden were also going to be held in the next few days. The Administration had not yet concluded its examination, and because of this could not yet give a positive answer.

Eban replied that he would convey his remarks, but he felt obliged to say that the delay would be received by Israel as a blow, and would constitute one of the most difficult moments in the history of the State's foreign relations. Here an amazed and shaken Dulles interrupted him and said that Eban's remarks were surprising and he found it hard to understand them since it had not been his intention to give a negative response but to indicate why a decision had not been reached. Eban again replied by pointing out the anxiety and distress in Israel. To sum up, the secretary said that in a short while he would come to a decision about the necessary action.[4]

Notes

1. G. Zarubin, Soviet ambassador in Washington.
2. See No. 29 (Editorial Note).
3. See Nos. 45 and 47.
4. For supplements to this telegram see No. 53.

49. Meeting: W. Eytan and Y. Tekoah – Major-General E.L.M. Burns and H. Vigier. 25 January 1956

Notes

1. See No. 56.
2. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.
3. See ibid., n. 6.
4. See n. 2 above.
5. This sentence states that "on the Egyptian side of the frontier, facing the El Auja area, no Egyptian defensive positions shall be closer to El Auja than El Qouseima and Abou Aoueigila." (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, p. 693.)

50. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 25 January 1956

Coded Tel. 263; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Massigli. According to the reports Massigli had received from the French embassy in Washington there was no chance whatever of agreement between the English and the Americans in the talks that were about to begin in Washington. The Americans increasingly had reservations about the Baghdad Pact and were in no hurry to agree to the British proposals for a new Marshall Plan for the region. Massigli added that he saw no way out of the Middle Eastern impasse, and asked with emphasis whether Israel still stood by its refusal to consider border adjustments in the Negev according to the formula proposed by the British. Tsur protested, saying that there was no point in setting prior conditions that could not be implemented, and it would be preferable to lay the groundwork by creating a convenient platform for negotiations. Regarding the Mystères, Massigli said that an American reply had not yet arrived. He complained

about the Americans who were pushing France to be the main arms supplier in the region, a fact which was complicating France's relations with the Arabs. He believed that the issue should be brought before the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee. Tsur protested, saying that this was contrary to the explicit promises of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French government. Massigli summed up the argument and said that as soon as they received the consent of the United States he would bring the matter before the new minister for foreign affairs[7] for a final decision.

Notes

1. Jean Chauvel, French ambassador in London.
2. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
3. See No. 12 and n. 3 there.
4. See No. 38 and n. 4 there.
5. Copy of the letter of 9 December 1955 in File 130.02/2522/21. See also Tsur to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 810, 13 December 1955, ibid.
6. See No. 4 and n. 2 there.
7. On 31 January Christian Pineau, a member of the Socialist Party, was appointed to the post of minister of foreign affairs.
8. See No. 16.
9. See No. 7.

51. A. Eshel (Jerusalem) to L. Kohn. 25 January 1956

Orig.: 130.02/2418/3

Summary

Eshel transmits to Kohn an aide mémoire that was delivered on 28 December 1955 by the East German chargé d'affaires in Moscow to Israeli Ambassador Avidar.[1] The fact that East Germany had sent this document had international significance and it implied recognition that Israel was the representative of the Jewish people. At the same time it contained total evasion of the obligation to pay reparations to Israel and individual compensation to the victims of the Nazis. In his view this document should not be left unanswered, and they should immediately set about drafting a reply. He asks Kohn to prepare a suitable draft. He believes that when the reply is presented, the German document should be made public together with the Israeli reply, but they would discuss this in due course.

Note

1. On file, but not printed here. It is typed on paper without a title and without an address and is unsigned and undated. In the document the East German government mentions its disavowal of the crimes and atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime, its activities to crush fascism, its anti-fascist legislation and its actions for the well-being of the victims of fascism including "citizens of Jewish extraction." The document also mentions that the East German government ensures the freedom of action of "communities of the Jewish faith" and assists with the building and renovation of synagogues (See also abstract of the document, 26 January 1956, 130.10/2544/1).

52. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to E. Yoran (The Hague). 25 January 1956

Copy: 130.02/2414/3

Summary

Eytan writes following Yoran's report on his conversation with the Chinese chargé d'affaires in the Hague. The latter's remarks were interesting, but it could be that they were simply words and he was not knowledgeable about the finer details of relations between Israel and China. In the context of Israel's efforts to establish relations with China, at the beginning of 1955 a trade delegation was dispatched to China which had the authority to explore, apart from matters of trade, the question of relations as well, but in general and without commitment.[2] At the time the delegation felt that the Chinese were ready for relations. After the delegation's return the government decided to propose the establishment of diplomatic relations to China and this was done in a letter to the Chinese.[3] But since then there had been no progress and the Israeli approaches had been answered politely but no action was taken.[4] At the moment Israel was unaware of the real intentions of the Chinese but guessed that the Arabs were involved. In light of these facts Eytan instructs Yoran to explain to the Chinese representative Israel's readiness to stand by the proposals made in May 1955, but the next step must be a definite and businesslike reply to Israel's proposal.[5]

Notes

1. Yoran's letter to Eytan is not extant, but on his conversations with his Chinese counterpart see his letter to Eytan from 2 February (in File 130.02/2414/3). Yoran wrote that the Chinese ambassador said that he would welcome an exchange of views

between them with regard to improving relations; although he was not authorised to conduct negotiations, it would nevertheless be good to maintain contact.

2. On the dispatch of the delegation and its activities in China see Vol. 9, Nos. 552 and 579.
3. Two copies of the letter were sent to the minister in Rangoon, and he was requested to give one copy to the Chinese ambassador and to destroy the second after reading it. It was explained that on account of the secrecy of the matter the letter had been typed by Eytan (See Levin to David Hacohen, 2 May 1955, 93.13/226/3). The letter itself was not found.
4. David Hacohen's letter was not found. A copy of the reply from the Chinese ambassador in Rangoon of 15 November 1955 in File 130.00/2414/3.
5. Yoran replied on 2 November that in the meantime he had talked to the Chinese chargé d'affaires in the context of the courtesy visits which they had paid each other. The conversations were friendly in tone and the two sides reiterated their desire for friendly relations between the two countries, but were careful to point out that the matter was not within their sphere of authority. Meanwhile a report had also been published that the head of a delegation of Egyptian journalists that had returned from China, where it had met with Chou En Lai, declared in Cairo that Chou En Lai had called Israel "an artificial creation." There was no additional confirmation of the Egyptian's remarks, and Yoran was instructed to ignore them and to behave as he had been instructed in the letter above (See Yoran to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 February 1956; E. Ben-Horin to D. Levin, 8 February 1956, 130.02/2414/3).

53. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 26 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA759; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban adds to his first telegram following the talk with Dulles.[1] The telegram had been for general information but lacked the essentials. Dulles explicitly said that the delay in making a decision regarding the arms issue was due to the fact that they were waiting for the results of Anderson's contacts.[2] Although the chances of the mission did not appear bright, nonetheless the United States was pinning its hopes on it and would not do anything to imperil it. He added that where Egypt was concerned the Americans held strong cards, such as the question of the United States joining the Baghdad Pact, aid for the Aswan dam, the price of cotton, etc. Therefore, until it became clear that all hope had vanished for the Anderson mission, he could not give a positive answer regarding the arms.

Eban replied that Israel could not allow its whole destiny to depend on the questionable possibility of a settlement. Moreover, there was no contradiction between exploring the chances of a settlement and Israel's

military strengthening. Dulles replied that the solution might possibly lie in the form of linking the two elements, but in the meantime all he asked was for a period of two weeks to assess the mission and then they would draw conclusions.

That same day Eban met with Allen Dulles and reminded him of the conversation with Sharett in which Sharett had expressed the fear that the Anderson mission would adversely affect Israel's chances of obtaining arms.[4] In his reply Dulles relied on the letter that had been delivered in Jerusalem[5] as proof that they were not deceiving Israel. He added that a decision would be reached within a week or two. Afterwards they proceeded to discuss the Soviet proposal to supply arms to Israel. Allen Dulles warned Eban that the Soviets were setting a trap. They were trying to induce Israel to approach them with a request in order to refuse it publicly and thus win the sympathy of the Arabs. Eban's impression was that the Americans did not attach importance to this proposal and believed that Israel would wait for the end of the talks with Anderson.

Notes

1. No. 48.
2. The reference is to the Anderson mission. See No. 14 (Editorial Note).
3. An oasis in the Arabian Peninsula. After it emerged that oil was likely to exist there, a dispute broke out over its ownership between Britain, which had protectorate rights over the Muscat, Oman and Abu Dhabi principalities, and Saudi Arabia. In 1955 the area was occupied by principality armies under British command. Saudi Arabia lodged a protest about this to Britain. The United States did not view Britain's involvement in this dispute favourably.
4. "The brother" – Allen Dulles. There is no record of this conversation.
5. Chaim Yaari, the first secretary in the Israel embassy in Washington, who brought with him the letter concerning the Anderson mission. See also No. 61, n. 2.

54. M. Sharett [Jerusalem] to A. Eban (Washington). 26 January 1956

Coded Tel. IWA; Inc.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Sharett reports on the meetings held with the presidential emissary Anderson. Altogether, six meetings were held, including those with the prime minister and the minister for foreign affairs. During the talks, Anderson evinced integrity, seriousness, understanding and a spiritual attitude towards Israel.

The following are the main elements:

1. He summed up Nasser's position as inflexible on the subject of territory. Without territorial continuity[2] he does not see any chance of a settlement.

2. His position is more flexible with regard to the refugees and he demands that they be given freedom of choice. He does not mind if only a few return as long as he is not accused of abandoning their case.

3. He is prepared to consider a meeting, but not at a high level, and it is not clear if at any level now.

4. He reiterated and stressed the weakness of his position in Egypt and in the Arab world and his determination to maintain his standing.

5. He warned repeatedly about the need to maintain secrecy.

6. Anderson emphasized to Nasser the importance of direct contact but had not asked him to commit himself as to whether he was prepared to send a high-ranking envoy to a meeting since he did not know if Israel would agree to a meeting.

7. He said that he did not regard himself as a mediator putting forward suggestions, but only as a facilitator to create a climate that would make a meeting possible and to clarify the extent of negotiability of the problems. It was clear to him that only representatives of the parties could adopt binding positions.

8. He put forward the idea that both parties would declare in writing to the president their readiness for a total cease-fire and the punishment of its violators, and their intention to progress to a settlement of the issues. The Israeli representatives answered affirmatively, but pointed out that there was no point in a declaration alone, but that orders must also percolate to the rank and file.

9. Anderson expounded at length Nasser's explanations about the arms deal and his position vis-à-vis the West. He laid the blame on the Baghdad Pact which symbolised in Nasser's eyes foreign domination, mainly British, in the Middle East.

10. Obviously, apart from the question of Israel, the talks had focussed on the central issue of Egyptian-American relations and Soviet penetration.

11. In their remarks the Israeli representatives had stressed Israel's desire for peace and its belief that it was attainable since there were no substantial conflicts of interest between Israel and Egypt.

12. They described the great potential of a pact and mutual assistance between the two states.

13. They rejected outright the demand for territorial continuity.[5]

14. They rejected the principle of freedom of choice for the refugees and indicated agreement to accept "x" thousands in the broad framework of family reunification.

15. They asserted that a direct meeting was an absolute condition for any progress.

16. They stressed that the meeting must be without pre-conditions and without a set agenda. The participants at the meeting would decide on an agenda. Sharett formulated the aim of the meeting: to explore the possibilities of understanding.

17. The envoy asked if Israel had prior suggestions that he could bring up in Israel's name or as originating from him. The Israeli representatives advised against this and said that in the course of negotiations Israel would put forward all kinds of proposals.

18. He was told that even if results were not forthcoming Israel would not consider the meeting as a failure but as a stage in progress, leading to creation of personal contact.

19. Israel undertook to maintain absolute secrecy in the future, even if a meeting was unproductive.

20. Israel stressed the importance of a high-level meeting, but not as a condition. Sharett raised the possibility of his participation in a meeting, not necessarily with his Egyptian counterpart.

21. Israel preferred a meeting in Cairo thus ensuring continuous contact with Nasser and absolute secrecy.

22. Israel warned against foot-dragging tactics, insisting that the presentation of the matter was most urgent for Eisenhower since he had to know what the general trend was.

23. Israel stressed that for all its desire and belief in a settlement it had doubts concerning the sincerity of Nasser's intentions with regard to a settlement of any kind and his interest in working towards one, in view of his arms buildup and his ambitions in the Arab, Islamic and African worlds.

24. Ben-Gurion and Sharett insisted on the gravity of Israel's situation and the urgent need for weapons. The prime minister summed up: if the United States is unable to bring about peace its obligation is at least to prevent war, and this could only be through supplying arms.

25. The envoy did not repeat Nasser's complaint about the Gaza raid[6] as a cause of deterioration. Nonetheless, Israel provided explanations about the matter.

26. Sharett told of the contacts that had taken place in December 1954.[7]

27. In all the meetings the prime minister was the main and most active speaker.

28. The envoy promised to return in the next few days.

Notes

1. Kermit Roosevelt, of the American Central Intelligence Agency.

2. Between Egypt and Jordan, see No. 12 and n. 3 there.
3. In August 1955 the Egyptians fired at an I.D.F. patrol near Mefalsim (close to the Gaza Strip border). In reaction I.D.F. soldiers temporarily occupied the outpost involved, killing three Egyptian soldiers and wounding eight.
4. These talks took place when the Western heads of state were in Paris for the NATO Council conference (On the talks see Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1955, 130.02/2456/8; Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassy in London, Tel. 748, 26 October 1955, 130.09/2346/3).
5. In a telegram to Eban (563, 29 January 1956, 93.01/2213/7) Sharett asked to add this sentence to the paragraph: "both from the standpoint of the fragmentation of Israel, and from the standpoint of the danger to the West involved in opening a door to the spread of the domination of militant Egyptian neutralism."
6. On 28 February 1955 I.D.F. soldiers attacked an army camp near Gaza, as well as the railway station and the city's water installation. 36 Egyptian soldiers and 8 Israeli soldiers were killed. This incident served Nasser as a pretext for justifying the need for the arms deal with Czechoslovakia.
7. On the contacts between Israel and Egypt in December 1954, the exchange of messages and the failed attempt to organise a high-level meeting, see Vol. 9, No. 509 ff.
8. The matter is obscure.
9. See No. 56.
10. See No. 45.

55. A. Levavi (Belgrade) to the East European Division. 26 January 1956

Coded Tel. 43; Inc.: 130.09/2298/11

Summary

Levavi reports on a conversation with the Yugoslav minister of foreign affairs, Popovic. Levavi complained about the Yugoslav position on the Arab-Israeli issue and made particular reference to the anti-Israel attitude of their representative in the Security Council over the Lake Tiberias affair, who had joined in the call to impose compensation payments on Israel.[3] Popovic replied that their aim in the Security Council was to obtain unanimity as far as possible and the subject of compensation was aimed at that. In future they would discuss each case individually. He went on to explain that they were paying closer attention to the Arab states since they were less developed than Israel, and they wanted to influence the Arabs in the direction of moderation. He spoke in a conciliatory manner, but without trying to tone down the essence of his remarks.

Notes

1. The Yugoslav minister of foreign affairs, Koca Popovic, accompanied President Tito on his visit to Egypt in December 1955 – January 1956.
2. In February 1955 Tito was invited to visit Israel. In April Israel was informed that Tito could not visit that year but was prepared to consider a visit at a later date (See Levavi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 345, 20 April 1955, 130.09/2298/11). In March 1956 Levavi estimated that the chances for Tito's visit to Israel were "very slim" (See Levavi to Sharett, 25 March 1956, 130.11/2510/7).
3. See for example Eban to Sharett, Tel.707, 14 January 1956 (in File 130.09/2311/7) on Yugoslavia's demand, together with other states, to obligate Israel to pay compensation to Syria in the wake of the Lake Tiberias incident.
4. The first instance of a Soviet veto in the Security Council relating to the Arab-Israel conflict was in January 1954 in the debate on the diversion of the Jordan in the vicinity of the Benot Yaaqov bridge.
5. The strengthening of ties between Yugoslavia and Egypt following Tito's visit to that country, Yugoslavia's hostile attitude in the Security Council debates on the Lake Tiberias incident, and reports which reached Israel to the effect that arms which Egypt had bought in Czechoslovakia were being transferred via Yugoslavia, which had even agreed to supply arms to the Arabs, aroused concern in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was suggested that Sharett should invite the Yugoslav minister for a conversation and that Jewish leaders abroad should talk with the Yugoslav ambassadors (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the legation in Belgrade, Tels. 30, 34, in January 1956, 130.09/2398/11; Eshel to the bureaux of the minister and the director-general, 31 January 1956, 130.11/2510/7).

56. Meeting of the U.N. Secretary-General with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem, 24 January). 27 January 1956

Report: 130.02/2404/3

Summary

The meeting took place in Jerusalem. The secretary-general began by giving his impressions of his visit to Israel and then a general discussion took place about international policy in the U.N. Afterwards they proceeded to discuss Israeli affairs.

The first topic was Israel's attempt to elicit from Egypt a clear declaration of its readiness for a cease-fire and for an undertaking to preserve the armistice. The secretary-general described his talks with Nasser and Fawzi in Egypt on this subject. Nasser claimed to the secretary-general that he was very interested in preserving quiet along the border, but the fact that Israel was operating motorised patrols along the line was causing unrest.

He suggested that the forces of both sides be moved 500 metres back from the line. The secretary-general replied that Burns had in fact accepted this suggestion and he would be authorised to verify how this arrangement was being implemented in each sector. This arrangement did not solve the question of the raids and he added that any separation must be accompanied by effective measures to prevent raids. It was clear that the discussion on this matter between the secretary-general and Nasser had ended inconclusively, and the secretary-general ended the discussion by observing that the matter was in the hands of Burns and he did not see it as his job to solve this problem.

They then went on to discuss the Nitzana question. The secretary-general noted that Egypt had in fact accepted Israel's position, but in a language that provided them with a face-saving formula. They agreed that the border lines of the demilitarized zone should be marked by the U.N. observers "in every place where this marking was required." Obviously, Burns would decide where the marking was required, and it was clear that he would only mark the international border. In addition, they announced that they had already removed the Egyptian forces from the area, and if it transpired that forces remained there above the permitted number they would accept Burns's ruling unconditionally. Summing up the conversation on this issue, an announcement was drafted. The text was presented to the prime minister who expressed his agreement, and the secretary-general said that now Burns would confer with the sides in order to implement the arrangement.

After that the secretary-general laid on the table the text of the statement that he planned to make at the end of his Middle East tour. He mentioned the proposals that Gideon Rafael had raised with him. The Egyptians had approved the text and he asked for Israel's consent. Sharett raised two questions concerning paragraph 3 in this text. Firstly, was Egypt aware that signing this document meant an undertaking to keep the cease-fire, to put an end to the boycott and to cease harassment of shipping; secondly, was Jordan aware that signing this text obligated it to activate Article VIII in the armistice agreement, including freedom of access to the holy sites, to Mount Scopus, etc.? The secretary replied that he could not be certain that these assumptions that had been mentioned were clear in Cairo or would be clear in Amman. This public statement in his view was similar from a moral standpoint to the preamble to the U.N. Charter which contained lofty principles, but which in many cases was not observed.[8]

Notes

1. In the first part of the conversation, which is not printed here, the secretary-general gave impressions of his visit to Israel and a free exchange ensued on new developments and trends in the United Nations.

2. The conversation took place on 5 December 1955, see minutes of the conversation in File 130.16/2951/14.
3. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.
4. See No. 17, n.6.
5. See n. 8 below.
6. See Vol. 3, Appendix 8, p. 717.
7. Sharett came to the airport to welcome Hammarskjöld on his arrival in Israel on 23 January, but the secretary-general prolonged his consultation with General Burns (apparently concerning the secretary's visit to Jerusalem), whilst ignoring Sharett, who left the airport by himself. Eytan and Rafael accompanied Hammarskjöld to Jerusalem (See M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, p. 1337 [Hebrew]).
8. The statement to the press, published on 30 January, reads as follows:
   As a result of these exchanges of views, I have, I believe, acquired a deeper understanding of the many and great difficulties with which the situation is fraught. These were not minimised. However, after my discussions, I feel I can say that all concerned recognised the importance of a settlement being reached and have affirmed not only their faith in the principles and purposes of the United Nations, but also their determination, in accordance with their obligations under the Charter and under the General Armistice Agreements, to abstain from any acts of hostility or aggression and above all to settle conflicts, when they may arise, by peaceful means.
   For a detailed report on the Hammarskjöld visit see Cidor to the Bureau of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 February 1956, 130.02/2404/3.

57. A. Eban (New York) to M. Sharett. 27 January 1956

Coded Tel. XA992; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban expresses the considered opinion of the embassy regarding approaching the Soviets with a request for arms.[1] He notes that this followed very thorough assessment and inquiry. The conclusion is that this is a trap designed on the one hand to sabotage the chances of Israel's requests to the United States or the countries within its orbit, and on the other hand to win approval in the eyes of the Arabs. Such an approach would be considered a direct affront to the president and the Anderson mission, on which the Administration pinned great hopes. They believed that if the public campaign in November and December[5] had not been halted, Israel would have been very close to receiving arms. Today too nobody regards the possibility as being terminated. He knows how cruel the waiting is, but now the campaign for the arms was reaching a climax and also forces who until now had been vacillating, like Stevenson for example, had joined in.

Israel had still not reached the high point of its influence. The two week period allocated by the secretary of state should be exploited to continue to cooperate with Anderson and to keep up and accelerate public activity and not to act impetuously and to approach the Soviets, which was certain to bring destruction and had no chance whatever of succeeding.

Notes

1. See No. 25.
2. Col. Katriel Salmon, I.D.F. attaché in Washington.
3. The emissary Anderson – See No. 56.
4. See No. 5, n. 3.
5. On 7 November 1955 the embassy reported that after talks with the leaders of United States Jewry it was agreed to embark on a public campaign calling for defensive arms for Israel and the signing of a security treaty with it. The campaign was to continue until January 1956 when it would reach a climax with a conference of representatives of all the Jewish organisations in the United States which was due to convene in Washington on 18 January. In the course of this conference delegations were to visit the offices of senators and members of the House of Representatives to urge them to act (See Shiloah to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 482, 7 November 1955, 93.01/2212/1). For further details concerning the activity in the field see Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, X921, 9 January 1956, 130.02/2446/4.
6. See No. 53.

58. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 28 January 1956

Coded Tel. WIA774; Inc.: 130.09/2311/7

Summary

Eban reports on his talk with Silver, who had visited the White House and talked with Adams, the president's aide.[1] According to Silver, Adams had told him there was no basis for the assumption that the United States would abandon Israel in the event of an Arab attack. The reply to the arms request was being delayed due to the efforts underway to explore more fundamental possibilities of stabilising the situation in the Middle East. Adams also promised to talk with Dulles, and in fact it had been conveyed to Silver later through a messenger that Dulles had confirmed Adams' assumptions. Adams also promised to weigh the issuing of an announcement based on these assumptions. Eban warned Silver against encouraging any announcement that did not contain a tangible commitment regarding the arms and ensuring

Israel's security. Silver promised to stand by Israel in any circumstances, but expressed some personal views. He believed that Israel was exaggerating the value it attached to additional arms as a guarantee of its security. He did not doubt that the United States would intervene effectively if Israel were attacked. The Lake Tiberias operation had caused harm, in that it had halted the sympathetic momentum of public opinion. Only a public campaign could have, and still could, speed up the tempo of positive action by the Administration.

Notes

1. Sherman Adams, aide to President Eisenhower.
2. See Nos. 48, 53.
3. Jacob Blaustein, honorary president of the American Jewish Committee. No report on this conversation was found.

59. F. E. Shinnar (Cologne) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 28 January 1956

Coded Tel. 495; Inc.: 130.09/2354/4

Summary

Shinnar cables about his talk with Brentano.[1] He said that from the beginning of his term of office he had looked forward to the establishment of normal relations with Israel. At the same time he noted that his staff were apprehensive that Egypt and the Arab states would react by recognising East Germany, which was liable to bring in its wake a similar step by other states. He stressed that for his part he was not prepared to put this consideration above his desire for normal relations with Israel, but he must lay the groundwork and advance step by step. He would suggest to Adenauer to consult with Britain and the United States, and would inform Israel about it. To this end he suggested further meetings in the future.

Shinnar replied that he appreciated his frankness, and in accordance with Sharett's directive, mentioned the idea of a delegation as first stage, to deal with the implementation of the reparations agreement and consular aims. It was agreed to continue talks after he had consulted with Adenauer.

Shinnar's impression was that it would be possible to finalise the negotiations within the next four weeks and the delegation could leave in April–May. Brentano's position was sincere and positive and he would take the first opportunity in the course of 1956 to propose full diplomatic relations.[6]

Notes

1. In the course of 1955 unofficial inquiries were made regarding the possibility of establishing a German consular office in Israel. The idea came from the Germans and was not dismissed by Sharett, who authorised Shinnar to hold talks on the establishment of a German consular-trade mission in Israel (See F.E. Shinnar, *Under the Yoke of Necessity and Emotion*, p. 97 [Hebrew]; Shinnar to Sharett, 8 November 1955, 22 December 1955, 93.43/304/9).
2. Filed under 130.02/2413/3.
3. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
4. The question of relations with Germany was discussed by the Israeli government on 15 January. It was decided to postpone the proposal concerning the establishment of diplomatic relations with Germany and to authorise the minister of foreign affairs to take all the necessary steps that would lead to the establishing of a consular-trade mission of the German Federal Republic immediately. Sharett conveyed the government decision in a telegram and authorised Shinnar to enter immediately into negotiations for the establishment of the mission. (See Sharett to Shinnar, Tel. 653, 16 January 1956, 93.43/304/4.
5. On Goldmann's activity, see No. 102, n. 3.
6. Sharett replied to this telegram as follows: "Awaiting the written report and for the present find it hard to understand his reaction which relates entirely to establishing diplomatic relations, whereas our proposal at this stage was to be a consular-trade mission. His remarks are full of troubling points" (See Sharett to Shinnar, Tel. 672, 30 January 1956, 2354/2).

60. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 29 January 1956

Coded Tel. 452; Outg: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Sharett instructs Eban to prepare a memorandum to be presented to the secretary of state and the president, before the opening of the talks between Eisenhower and Eden.[1] The memorandum will explain Israel's position, point out to the United States its responsibility and warn it against being caught in British plots against Israel. It should be presented by the following day and should take into consideration the possibility of publication, by an Israeli decision or following an American leakage. The memorandum should contain a preamble, three paragraphs and a summary along the following lines:
1. The preamble will contain a summary of the Israeli positions as expressed by the Israeli representatives until now.

2. The first part will deal with the disturbance of the arms balance and the obligation of the United States to maintain it.
3. The second part will deal with the possibility of an Arab-Israel settlement, Israel's desire for peace, the need to keep the armistice agreements, Israel's opposition to unilateral territorial concessions.
4. The third part will deal among other things with regional security; Israel's opposition to the Baghdad Pact and description of the pact as a source of instability in the region; description of the ineffectiveness of the Tripartite Declaration and the need to replace it with a guarantee or a treaty.
5. The summing up will present Israel's recommendations regarding policy in the region: a. concern for the scrupulous implementation of the armistice agreements; b. working towards a restoration of the arms balance; c. a demand for an end to the state of belligerency; d. working towards direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states; e. maintenance of the existing territorial status quo; f. aid for the economic development of the region.[7]

Notes

1. See No. 65 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 22 and notes 3 and 4 there.
3. See No. 45.
4. See No. 15 and n. 11 there.
5. No. 47.
6. No. 22.
7. Copy of the memorandum, dated 31 January 1966, in File 130.02/2480/9.

61. M. Sharett [Jerusalem] to the Israel Ambassador in Washington. 30 January 1956

Coded Tel. IWA545; Inc.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

In a personal telegram Sharett informs Eban that no progress has been made in the talks with Anderson. Sharett is convinced that Israel has been misled completely and in an irresponsible manner by the first message.[1]

Note

1. This message has not been traced. According to American sources it was sent on 23 December and among other things it said that feelers put out to Nasser in recent days

offered some hope that he would be prepared to enter into negotiations (See *FRUS 1955-57*, Vol. XIV, No. 472, n. 2).

In a snatched conversation which Shiloah had with Russell before the latter went to meet Anderson in Europe, Russell said that Anderson had told him that he believed that both Egypt and Israel were interested in a settlement, but Nasser maintained that he required at least six months to prepare public opinion in the Arab world. Till then he could not enter into substantive negotiations apart from secret meetings from time to time, with Anderson alone. This arrangement did not appeal to Anderson and Dulles, who were prepared at the very most to delay making the arrangement public for six months. Shiloah replied that Israel could not wait and it needed defensive arms immediately. Russell repeated that they were taking this into account and the secretary of state and Anderson were of the opinion that they must demand that Nasser make clear exactly where he stood on all the problems, such as: the refugee issue, compensation, the Suez blockade and so forth, so that they could reach a clear-cut conclusion with regard to the gap between the sides and if there was a possibility of bridging it (See Shiloah to Sharett, WIA781, 30 January 1956, 93.01/2213/7).

62. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 30 January 1956

Coded Tel. 547; Outg: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Sharett refers to the embassy telegram concerning the work in the Jordan river channel and the Johnston plan.[1] Johnston had previously stated that Nasser had promised him to obtain Syrian agreement within two or three months. Sharett had told him then that he was prepared to give him four months, in fact until the end of February. They must insist forcefully that Nasser keep his word. Israel sees itself free to renew the work in the demilitarized zone at the end of the rainy season and its position vis-à-vis the Security Council was definitely in order, since it had been asked to stop for a short time, and meanwhile two and a half years had passed and there had been an inquiry that had vindicated Israel's claims.[3] Nevertheless, Israel would continue with the work outside the demilitarized zone, just as it had worked there in the previous season. Financial assistance had to be requested for the project, and Israel was prepared to undertake that in the absence of an agreement, it would not overstep the amounts of water that had been allocated to it by Johnston. This was all that had to be told to Johnston.[4]

Sharett adds that this presentation of things was aimed at (1) using the threat of renewal of work in the demilitarized zone in order to exert pressure on Syria; (2) demonstrating that Israel was prepared to test her case in the Security Council; and (3) trying to draw the Americans into offering Israel

immediate financial aid for the realisation of the project, on condition that it refrained for the moment from work in the demilitarized zone, and then it would discuss the matter again.

Notes

1. No. 46.
2. The telegram, dated 14 October 1955, in File 130.09/2310/16.
3. See No. 46, n.7.
4. These remarks were conveyed to Johnston at the beginning of February – See No. 68.

63. E. Najar (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassador in Paris. 30 January 1956

Copy: 130.10/2542/7

Summary

Najar refers to two letters from Tsur concerning contacts with Moroccan and Tunisian statesmen.[1] The four proposals raised by Tsur were important, and the Foreign Ministry would work to implement them, but this would take time, and meanwhile the Arabs were active. He believed it was time for a representative of the State of Israel – namely, the ambassador in Paris – to begin making contact with the North African political leadership, for example, Si Bekkai from Morocco. This was a political act of the highest order, and the French would also take an interest in it since it was their wish that North Africa should influence the Middle East and not vice-versa.[4]

Notes

1. The letter from 22 January was not found. In the letter dated 20 January Tsur made four suggestions for bringing Israel and North African states closer: 1. To include a Moslem representative in the Moroccan delegation to the citrus fruit conference to be held in Israel in spring 1956; 2. To try and restore contacts between the Histadrut and the workers' organisations in Morocco and Tunisia; 3. To establish contact between the Hebrew University Institute of Oriental Studies and the Ministries of Education in Morocco and Tunisia; 4. To try and establish contacts in the areas of agriculture and forestry (The letter in File 130.10/2547/7).
2. See the West European Division to Tsur, Tel. 641, 27 January 1956, 130.09/2347/1.
3. Sudan did not respond to Sharett's congratulatory telegram to the prime minister on the occasion of gaining independence, see No. 9.

4. Tsur replied that he took these remarks to mean a guideline for action (See his letter to the head of the West European Division, 3 February 1956, 130.02/2542/7).

64. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. 31 January 1956

Coded Tel. 286; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had informed him that American approval had been received for supply of the 12 Mystères.[1] They requested that Israel maintain secrecy. It was not impossible that more obstacles would arise, but undoubtedly an important step forward had been taken.

Notes

1. See No. 1.
2. See No. 50.
3. Yossef Nahmias, the Ministry of Defence representative in Paris.

65. Editorial Note

The Eisenhower-Eden Meetings in Washington in January 1956

The initiative for high level talks between the United States and Britain in order to coordinate positions on international issues came from the British Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, who in a message to President Eisenhower on 23 November 1955 pointed out that the main goal of these talks was to discuss the global situation.

The talks took place in the White House in Washington on 30 and 31 January 1956, and the subject of the Israel-Arab conflict figured prominently in them.

On 1 February a joint statement was issued and the following are the main points concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict:

1. There is a very urgent need for a settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. A settlement will be possible only if the two sides are willing to reconcile the positions they have hitherto taken.

2. The United States and Britain have declared their readiness to contribute to the settlement by helping to solve the problem of the refugees and by guaranteeing agreed frontiers.
3. Steps have been taken for holding of joint discussions on concrete forms of action which will have to be taken in the event of the use of force, or threat of force, or of preparations to violate the frontier or armistice lines. France will be invited to join these discussions.
4. The security of the states in this area cannot rest on arms alone, but rather on the international rule of law and upon the establishing of friendly relations between neighbours. The action of the Soviet Bloc in regard to arms supplies has added to the tensions in the area and increased the risk of war. The aim of the United States and Britain is to mitigate that risk.
5. They express full support for the efforts of General Burns to maintain peace on the borders. They will consider favourably recommendations for any necessary enlargement of his organisation and improvement of its capabilities.
The complete text of the statement is filed under 130.02/2455/9

66. Israel Ambassador in Moscow to the East European Division. 1 February 1956

Copy: 130.02/2410/8

Summary

The ambassador reports on a conversation held on his initiative with Foreign Minister Molotov. Avidar began by saying that after a stay of about 10 months in Moscow he was disappointed to see that there was no progress in the relations between the two countries at any level. Trade relations were restricted, cultural relations were practically non-existent, until now there had been no response to Israel's positive reply with regard to the exchange of parliamentary delegations[2] and most disturbing of all was the Czech arms deal with Egypt. Israel was presented in a negative light to public opinion and Khrushchev's remarks in the Supreme Soviet[3] were indicative of a negative line and an unfriendly attitude. Israel wished to strengthen relations and the ambassador intended to take advantage of his visit in Israel to this end.[1]

Molotov replied at length, and recalled the Soviet Union's support for the establishment of the State of Israel, which had been accompanied by the hope for the development of friendly relations. To the regret of the Soviets Israel had gone in other directions and under the influence of foreign circles

had adopted an extreme anti-Soviet position. He made light of the Czech arms deal, and argued that its importance was being blown out of proportion in the world and in Israel. Egypt, he said, was not strong enough and needed the arms for its defence. He contended that Israel was heating up the atmosphere with talk of a preventive war and with its military operations. Here he mentioned the Lake Tiberias operation and the operation in the demilitarized zone of Nitzana.[8]

They parted without reaching agreement; Avidar observed that, in spite of the easygoing atmosphere during the conversation, its content was quite serious.

Notes

1. Avidar was summoned for consultations on Israel-Soviet relations – see No. 114.
2. The proposal was conveyed to Israel on 6 January 1956. The Knesset Speaker, Sprintzak, reported this in the Knesset plenum on 28 February and expressed the hope that "shortly" parliamentary delegations would be exchanged between the two legislatures (See *Divrei HaKnesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 1182). Israel's reply was conveyed via the Israel embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (See Chelouche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 50, 13 March 1956, 130.11/2492/18).
3. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
4. The meeting took place on 31 October 1955. For a record of the conversation see M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 5, pp. 1274-1275 [Hebrew].
5. Following the throwing of a bomb at the Soviet legation in Israel in February 1953, the Soviet Union severed its diplomatic relations with Israel.
6. Relations were restored in July 1953. On the exchange of letters between Molotov and Sharett in this connection see No. 13, n. 8.
7. The report was submitted to the Security Council on 15 December 1955 (See U.N. Document S/3516).
8. In the early hours of 3 November 1955 I.D.F. forces attacked an Egyptian unit that had dug in inside the demilitarized zone of Nitzana and caused it heavy casualties. On the conversation with Voroshilov see Avidar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 818, 7 November 1955, 130.09/2326/4.

67. West European Division (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 2 February 1956

Coded Tel. 659; 130.09/2347/1

Summary

Sharett received the French Ambassador Gilbert at his invitation. The foreign minister expressed appreciation for the memorandum that had been

delivered in London and Washington in which France had voiced concern for the rights and security of Israel.[1] He expressed satisfaction that France had been invited to participate in the forthcoming discussions dealing with Arab-Israel relations.[2] The minister also added details about Israel's last letter to Washington.[5] On the subject of the Mystères he said that apparently there was an agreement but he was not clear about the difficulties raised by the French Ministry of Defence. Gilbert replied that at the political level everything was settled, but the Pentagon had not yet given its approval in writing. The administrative process in Washington would have to be accelerated. He had the impression that the State Department was very keen that France should shoulder the responsibility for Israel's military strengthening. Sharett at once answered that it was not Israel's intention to release the United States from its responsibility for Israel's security, although the sale of the planes represented an important breakthrough.

Gilbert also raised the question of the resumption of work in the channel of the Jordan river.[8] Sharett asked why France did not influence Syria to agree to the Johnston plan and why the Powers did not inform the Syrians that if the Johnston plan was not approved and Israel resumed work in the Jordan, they would be unable to support the Arabs in the Security Council. Gilbert replied that they were studying the problem and would find the right way in good time.

Notes

1. In a memorandum presented prior to the Eisenhower-Eden meeting, France's main positions on the subject of the Middle East were stated: a demand for united Three Power action; reservations about the Baghdad Pact and its expansion; instead of military pacts they should strive for the economic and social development of the region and the setting up of a permanent economic organisation open to all the countries in the region; in France's view Israel-Arab peace was a precondition for any constructive action, and it would participate in any effort by the Powers to achieve this peace, on condition that the vital interests and security of Israel were not harmed (See Tsur to the West European Division, Tel. 265, 30 January 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
2. See No. 65.
3. This apparently refers to proposals contained in the letter Dulles gave to Sharett at their meeting on 21 November 1955 – *FRUS 1955*, Vol. XIV, No. 424.
4. As conveyed in the Guildhall speech – See No. 23 and n. 8 there.
5. See No. 60 n. 7.
6. See No. 64.
7. No. 65. (Editorial Note).
8. See Nos. 46, 62.

68. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 2 February 1956

Coded Tel. WA804; Inc.: 130.09/2311/7

Summary

Eban reports on his meeting with Johnston. He conveyed Sharett's remarks to him.[1] Johnston received them without surprise. Currently the situation was as follows: the United States government was convinced that Israel intended to resume the work but was not enthusiastic. In the event of difficulties or shooting, it would side with Burns and much would depend on to whom he would pin the blame. Therefore much depended on the guidance given to Burns and they were preparing material. Obviously, if the State Department had spotted an opportunity to induce Israel to postpone the work it would have been prepared to pay for it. He suggests talking with Sherman[2] on this subject. He was well acquainted with the embassy's outlook.

Notes

1. See No. 62.
2. Meir Sherman, Israel's economic counsellor in the United States.

69. Major-General E.L.M. Burns to Y. Tekoah. 2 February 1956

Notes

1. A copy of the letter is in File 130.02/2439/6.
2. The Appendix was not printed here. It is appended to Burns's letter, ibid.
3. These letters are in File 130.02/2439/5.
4. On 26 October 1955 the Egyptian army penetrated into the demilitarized zone at Nitzana and began to set up positions there. Israel brought this to the attention of the U.N. It was told that the U.N.T.S.O had contacted the Egyptians on four occasions requesting the withdrawal of the forces, but without receiving a reply. Consequently, Israeli forces entered the region in the early hours of 3 November 1955, attacked the Egyptian positions, and forced the Egyptians to retreat from the area.
5. These articles state that neither one of the parties signatory to the armistice agreement shall carry out aggressive action against the population or armed forces of the other party, and that no element of the land, sea or air military or para-military forces of either party shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other party or against civilians in the territory under the control of that party (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, pp. 688-689).

6. See No. 56.
7. No documentation was found about such a meeting and it apparently did not take place.

70. Z. Argaman (Bucharest) to the East European Division. 2 February 1956

Coded Tel. 144; 130.09/2297/3

Summary

Argaman reports that on 30 January he handed a protest to the Romanian deputy foreign minister over the smear campaign against Israel accompanied by false and distorted reports about bloody riots in Tel Aviv.[1] During an exchange that lasted two hours Argaman dwelt on the history of Israel's relations with the Arabs and the total disregard of the Romanian press for the Arabs' acts of murder and sabotage[2] and the declarations of the Arab leaders.

In reply the deputy minister noted the sympathy existing in Romania for the Arab nations who were fighting for peace. This sympathy need not affect Israel's relations with Romania which were developing normally. He hoped that there was no connection between this appeal and the Romanian decision to upgrade the level of its representation in Syria and Egypt.[4] Romania desired friendly relations with all countries and was interested in cooperation to preserve the peace. With regard to the issue of family reunification, he said that there was no change in the government's position and they were continuing to issue passports.

Argaman suggested that in the talk with the Romanian chargé d'affaires the slow implementation of the issuing of passports should be pointed out, which did not in any way meet requirements. From the end of November no permits had been issued at all.[5] He should be told that if the issuing of permits was not resumed this would be interpreted as the desire of the Romanian government to halt the reunification of families and the Israel government would be unable to restrain an outburst by the immigrants of Romanian origin in Israel, whose protest it had sought to prevent until now.

Notes

1. On 29 January the Romanian press carried a report from Cairo according to which 33 people had been killed in Tel Aviv and many injured in "anti-militaristic

demonstrations." A report was also published that a Communist gathering had purportedly been attacked by the Israeli police and many participants injured (See the legation in Bucharest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 139, 29 January 1956, 130.09/2297/3). Similar reports were published in other East European countries, including the Soviet Union. It emerged that at the Communist gathering a fistfight had broken out among the participants and a number of people were hurt.

2. In January 1956 the Romanian press began to publish pro-Arab articles, which portrayed Israel as the aggressor and a tool of the Americans. Argaman asked for approval to lodge Israel's protest with the minister of foreign affairs (See the legation in Bucharest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 133, 17 January 1956, 130.09/2297/3). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that it approved of "a protest which would be vigorous in content, but restrained in form" (See Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the legation in Bucharest, Tel. 23, 19 January 1956, 130.09/2297/1).
3. Concerning the Lake Tiberias incident – see No. 29.
4. On 30 January an announcement was made in Bucharest on raising the level of representation between Romania and Egypt and Syria from that of chargés d'affaires to that of legations (See the legation in Bucharest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 140, 30 January 1956, 130.09/2297/3).
5. In a casual conversation between Argaman and the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Simion Bughici, on 7 November 1955, Argaman was told that "the issuing of passports had only begun, and that once things got going properly the rate would be increased" (See Argaman to the East European Division, Tel. 72, 130.09/2297/2). In a further conversation in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19 March the legation official asked if it was possible to hope for speeding up the rate of family reunification to thousands, and was told that the current rate was quite fast, although improvements were possible. The government had an attitude of goodwill, but the terms "family" and "reunification" had to be correctly understood (See the legation in Bucharest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 406, 19 March 1956, 130.09/2297/3).

71. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett (Jerusalem) and E. Elath (London). 3 February 1956

Coded Tel. WTEA84; 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban cables that in view of the consultations of the three Western Powers next week[1] he suggests making the following points:
a. The problem is not one of steps to be taken if there is aggression but of preventing it.
b. The arms question is of crucial importance. Israel is not opposed to Three Power treatment of the arms issue provided that the aim is to approve and not to reject.

c. Israel rejects entrusting responsibility for guarding the borders to the U.N. or to an international force and has reservations about increasing the number of observers.
d. Regarding the idea of intervention by forces currently in the region in the event of aggression, the principle of national sovereignty must be upheld, with the United States and Britain abiding by the rules of the U.N. Charter, even in an action taken outside the U.N. framework. Accordingly, intervention can only take place at the invitation of the side being attacked or that is about to be attacked.

He asks for Sharett's response.[3]

Notes

1. The same day Eban reported that at the beginning of the following week three-way consultations would be taking place in Washington as a follow-up to the Eisenhower-Eden discussions. The discussions would revolve not only around the issue of enacting guarantees against aggression but also about arms, since the Americans want the responsibility for this problem, particularly with regard to Israel, to be borne by the three Powers and not by one Power alone (See Eban's telegram to the United States Division, E. Elath and J. Tsur, WEA108, 3 February 1956, 93.01/2212/12).
2. See the announcement summing up the Eden-Eisenhower talks in File 130.02/2455/9.
3. Sharett replied that he approved of a, b, and c. As regards d, he felt doubtful about its tactical value at this stage. It would be better to concentrate in the next two weeks solely on the arms issue (See his telegram to Eban, 582, 5 February 1956, 130.02/2394/20).

72. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 3 February 1956

Coded Tel. 302; Inc.: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Tsur states: 1. that he will be having talks the following week before the tripartite meeting in Washington, and requests instructions.
2. The Eban memorandum will no doubt serve as a basis. Suggests emphasizing the following points:
a) Stressing the benefit the French had derived from their independent position, and warning them about being dragged along in the wake of their allies.

b) Demanding that France insist that the arming of Israel be completed before a re-affirmation of the 1950 declaration was decided upon.
c) In his opinion there is no chance of opposing plans to strengthen the declaration, but Israel must demand that the intervention of the Powers should take place not only in the event of a military operation but also in the event of any grave act of hostility such as systematic terrorist, incursions, a sea blockade, boycott, etc.
3. Tsur asks about Israel's position regarding an agreement between the Four Powers on the Middle East as well as regarding an international force on the borders.
He is awaiting instructions.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 60 and n.7 there.
2. In Sharett's reply it says: "Approve 1 and 2 (a) and (b), reject two (c) and 3" (See Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 668, 6 February 1956, in File 130.09/2347/1).

73. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 4 February 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 403; Outg: 130.09/2339/6

Summary

Tekoah reports on a conversation which Burns had with Eytan and himself concerning the Security Council resolution[1] and Burns' two letters asking for the views of the sides on the exchange of prisoners and steps to reduce the tension on Lake Tiberias.[2] Eytan began by saying that Israel had no objection to entering immediately into a discussion about measures on Lake Tiberias, but they believed that it should not be linked with the question of the P.O.W.s, which should be resolved without delay. Furthermore, the Syrians were liable to demand a discussion of matters that did not appear in Burns's letters, and Israel was apprehensive about raising additional issues connected to the armistice problem as a whole. Burns gave a clear reply only with regard to the P.O.W. issue and said that it should be discussed at the same time as other matters. He suggested that Israel and Syria should begin negotiations on this issue. They answered him that there was no need for discussions, and he must ask the Syrians for a date for the release of the P.O.W.s.

Burns then proceeded to his proposals concerning the Lake Tiberias issue. Eytan distinguished between two groups of proposals: those that were based on the present conditions of the armistice agreement, such as preventing Syrian fishing, non-interference with Israeli fishing, the prevention of shooting, etc., and a second group of proposals which required changes in the agreement, such as giving the Syrians permission to draw water from the lake and limiting the sailing of Israeli police boats to 250 metres from the shore. Israel agreed to all the proposals in the first group. As for the second group – they must negotiate. At this point a discussion arose regarding the significance of the drawing of water and the sailing of police boats on the lake. Burns explained that with regard to the boats he had not meant a written agreement but a verbal understanding. He agreed that Syrian acceptance of such an agreement would mean cancelling the instructions that had been discovered in the Syrian documents that had been seized in Lake Tiberias operation.

Notes

1. Concerning the Lake Tiberias incident in December 1955 – See No. 29 (Editorial Note).
2. One letter deals with the Security Council resolution – See No. 35. The letter concerning the exchange of prisoners between Israel and Syria is filed under 130.02/2406/13.
3. This article states among other things that the arrangements made for the Armistice Demarcation Line between the Israeli and Syrian armed forces and for the Demilitarized Zone are not to be interpreted as having any relation whatsoever to ultimate territorial arrangements affecting the two parties to this agreement (See Vol. 3, Appendix 9, p.725).
4. See ibid., p. 729.
5. In April 1951 – See Vol. 6, No. 108.
6. Among the documents seized in the Syrian positions during the I.D.F. raid in December 1955 there was a document in which the Syrian chief of staff asserts that the 250-metre strip along the north-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias is within the zone of the Syrian territorial waters, and therefore he gave orders to fire at any Israel boat entering this zone (See General Burns's report, U.N. Document S/3516/Add/l, dated 30 December 1955).
7. On Burns's talks in Damascus see No. 80. The subjects of the arrangements on Lake Tiberias and the exchanges of prisoners with Syria were discussed by Sharett and Burns on 21 February – See No. 104.

74. United States Division (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 6 February 1956

Coded Tel. IWA591; Outg.: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

The division reports on consultations that took place following Eban's telegram.[1] It was decided not to reject the grant that had been offered, but to protest to the Administration about the discrimination as compared with Egypt and to demand that the grant be increased. Perhaps the pressure might succeed in increasing the size of the grant a little and would at least deter the Administration from continuing the discrimination. In addition, they must present a request for a loan from the Export-Import Bank and present a detailed plan for financing the national water plan to the State Department. In the meantime Israel should demand that the United States obtain the agreement of the Arabs to the Johnston plan, or that it should support Israel's resumption of the Jordan diversion work financially or politically.

Notes

1. In this telegram (Tel. 816, 3 February 1956, 130.09/2311/7) Eban replies to a telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tel. 576, 3 February 1956, 130.09/2311/5) informing him that a consultation will be held in the minister's office with regard to the meagre United States grant to Israel, and in the meantime Eban is requested to refrain from any reactions in this regard. Eban replied that in his opinion there was no room for a public response and other forms of action should be adopted.
2. The United States ambassador in Israel was summoned to the minister of foreign affairs for a conversation about this matter, see No. 94.

75. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 6 February 1956.

Coded Tel. 308; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports that he had a meeting with Habib Bourguiba. His conclusions are that Bourguiba is hostile to Egypt, and to Nasser in particular, stands by his decision to cooperate with France and believes that the Arab attitude to Israel is irrational and that they must compromise on Israel's existence.

Bourguiba considers there is a need for compromise on the refugee issue. He is aware of the progress in Israel and in principle is interested in cooperation. Promises that an independent Tunisia will not join the camp of Israel's enemies, but he has to exercise caution because of the extremism of his opponents there.

Note

1. The letter, dated 6 February, in File 130.10/2541/26.

76. J. Herzog (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 7 February 1956

Coded Tel. IWA598; Inc.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Herzog reports on two meetings with the emissary Anderson which took place between 30 January and 1 February. In the meetings Anderson and Kermit Roosevelt participated on the one hand, Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Kollek and Herzog on the other.

Anderson began by saying that he had met twice with Nasser and Muhi al-din. He had reported on his talks in Israel. Nasser's reactions are: 1. He appeared to be impressed by Ben-Gurion and Sharett's understanding of his situation. 2. He claimed that he did not possess basic data on the refugees and on the possibility of settling them in Arab lands, and would study the matter. 3. He was prepared to meet, but had not yet decided finally, was afraid of a leak, and had not yet got over the disappointment he had experienced with the affair of the contacts at the end of 1954.[3] He maintained that he had never promised that he would be able to annul death sentences if these were imposed. The Gaza operation in his view was a response to the Cairo trial and he accused Israel of deception.[4] Gaza had surprised him and caused him many internal complications. 4. He accepted the idea of simultaneous letters from himself and Ben-Gurion to the president, and showed Anderson a draft in which he denied any hostile intentions towards Israel and promised to restore quiet to the borders. According to Anderson the draft was incomplete, and Nasser promised to complete and expand it. 5. He put forward proposals for preventing incidents, such as moving the forces of both sides away from the border, and pointed out that the refugee issue was a source of agitation and unrest. 6. He promised to continue to exert influence on the Arab countries with regard to the Johnston plan. 7. He

remarked that if an agreement was reached, the ban on shipping flying the Israeli flag would be lifted in the Canal and there would be trade between Israel and the Arab states.

Anderson put three direct questions to Nasser: Did he harbour hostile intentions towards Israel? The response was negative.
Did he sincerely wish for a settlement? The response was affirmative. Had there been progress toward a settlement since the beginning of the mission? He replied that he would watch Israel's behaviour in the coming weeks and then would be able to give an answer.

Ben-Gurion replied that he was prepared to assume that Nasser was sincere, but his national responsibility obliged him to take into consideration that he was acting deceitfully, particularly in light of his refusal to order a cease-fire. Moreover, even if his intentions were beneficent, it was doubtful that he could withstand the pressure of his associates in Egypt and the rest of the Arab states that he should use his military superiority against Israel. In reply to Anderson's request that Israel avoid resumption of the work in the Jordan river bed for a while in order to create a congenial atmosphere, Ben-Gurion replied that without direct reference to the work in the Jordan, he was prepared to do certain things in order to create a congenial atmosphere, but on condition that the United States gave Israel weapons that would free it from danger. He saw the following stages in the contacts: 1. Removal of the danger of war by supplying Israel with arms. 2. Cease-fire. 3. Establishing a channel of communication. 4. Meeting of representatives. 5. Meeting of the heads of government of both sides with the ability to make decisions. Concerning the arms issue, Anderson replied that in the near future no consideration at all must be allowed to hamper the search for ways to reach a settlement.

At the second meeting Sharett stressed that dragging out the negotiations had to be avoided. On Israel's part there was absolute readiness to answer the president's call positively, and the matter was urgent and must not be allowed to degenerate into futility. They must not be satisfied with general remarks by Nasser and concrete commitments must be obtained from him.

Anderson replied that he understood the time factor. The momentum had to be sustained and at the same time there was a need to beware of excessive urgency that might lead to the opposite results. Anderson announced that he was leaving for Athens and would decide there whether to visit Egypt again or to return to Washington. In the latter case he would return to Israel within a short time.

Notes

1. Robert Anderson.
2. See No. 54.

3. See ibid., n.10.
4. See ibid., n. 9.
5. On the contacts in Paris in December 1954 see Vol. 9, No. 509 ff.

77. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 7 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA837; Outg.: 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Allen. He had particularly stressed the matter of arms. He had already cabled Allen's response.[1] When Eban argued that Israel was encountering difficulties in other countries because of the total absence of an American contribution and their reluctance to be the only ones to supply arms to Israel, Allen admitted that this was an important consideration, but did not draw any conclusion from it. He stressed once again that no decision had been taken to deny Israel arms, but the issue involved other processes in the search for a settlement that had not yet ended. Eban insisted that time was passing. Allen replied that the waiting period would not last long. Eban was unsuccessful in his attempts to elicit a more precise explanation from Allen. The latter referred him to the secretary of state's letter which would be published in another two hours.[3] It was agreed that the contact would be resumed after reading the letter. Eban adds that he had also requested a meeting with the secretary or his representative.

Allen then proceeded to talk about the Anglo-American declaration[5]. He asked Eban's opinion about the idea that the Powers should make a commitment to mobilise their forces in the region in the event of aggression. Eban replied that Israel would discuss the matter but asked what the international authority would be for such an idea, if it was not based on agreement with the parties. He emphasised that even if Israel had an effective guarantee it would not consider it as a substitute for self-defence, hence the importance of the arms issue. In reply Allen again referred him to the secretary's letter. In this connection he suggested that Israel should consult Assembly Resolution No. 378 from November 1950.[6]

Eban raised the question of Benot Yaaqov as suggested by Sharett.[7] Allen said that he would consider approaching Syria, but it was up to Israel to give careful consideration to its steps. Possibly its position was right, but it was possible to be right and cause a flare-up. He also argued that in any event Israel would be unable to resume the work because of a lack of equipment.

Notes

1. Regarding the arms, Allen said "that Israel would discern a shift towards approval in the Dulles statement which will be issued this evening" (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 829, 6 February 1956, 130.09/2311/7).
2. Allen said that the United States had sent France in recent days a positive statement concerning the Mystères "and now the matter is entirely in the hands of the French Government" (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 828, 6 February 1956, ibid.).
3. On 3 February 40 Republican members of the American House of Representatives sent a letter to Dulles in which they asked that Israel be supplied with defensive weapons. Dulles's reply was given in a letter dated 6 February. It said among other things that the United States did not believe that the arms imbalance between Israel and the Arab states could be redressed sufficiently by additional arms purchases by Israel. He listed factors that could contribute to Israel's security: the United Nations, the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 and the Eisenhower-Eden statement. The United States, he said, did not exclude the possibility of selling arms to Israel, but it believed that the security of the Middle Eastern states could not be based on arms alone, but on the international rule of law and on the establishment of friendly relations between neighbours (See the text distributed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel Missions Abroad, 8 February 1956, 130.02/2455/5). Dulles expanded the ideas in his letter in a conversation with a delegation of five members of the House of Representatives.
4. The conversation took place on 10 February – See No. 84.
5. See No. 65 (Editorial Note).
6. This resolution dealt with how a country that was attacked should act in order to bring about an end to hostile acts. Eban commented on this in two telegrams, in one (Eban to Rafael, Tel. 846, 8 February 1956, 130.02/2403/14) it says: "Allen's reference to this resolution comes in an important context. I pointedly asked what would be the aim of the Western intervention in the event of aggression. Would you be satisfied with a cease-fire when Egypt was occupying a part of the Negev, or would you demand the restoration of the armistice situation to what it was previously? He and Bergus affirmed that the aim would be the prevention of border changes and in this connection Allen suggested that I read General Assembly Resolution (V) 378." In his second telegram it says that in Allen's view "it contains (in Resolution 378) an important support from the standpoint of repulsing aggression aimed at changing the armistice borders" (See Eban to Rafael, Tel. 832, 6 February 1956, 130.09/2311/7). For the resolution of 17 November 1950 see United Nations Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly during the period 19 Sept. -15 Dec., pp. 12-13.
7. Sharett suggested that Eban should raise "as if reflecting aloud" the possibility of an approach by the three Western Powers to the Syrian Government urging it to reach a settlement based on the Johnston plan (See Sharett to Eban, Tel. 588, 6 February 1956, 130.09/2311/5).

78. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 7 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA839; Outg: 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban reports on his talk with the French ambassador on the eve of the Three Power meeting.[1] The ambassador said that the inclination to reduce the territory of the State of Israel had faded, particularly in light of the chilly reaction of Dulles and the two Senate leaders.[2] He confirmed that the main topic of discussion would be to decide on the commitment of the Three Powers to intervene militarily against the changing of borders by force. He himself had reservations about the idea. Eban replied that Israel was sceptical with regard to all these ideas, including a guarantee, at least as a rapid remedy for the existing danger, and it placed all its emphasis on amending the arms balance, and here France's help was required. The ambassador replied that the matter was included in the agenda, but would not commit himself. Finally, they discussed the question of the resumption of work on the diversion of the Jordan river channel.[3] The ambassador advised against taking hasty steps and suggested they obtain the backing of Burns, or at least his acceptance. Eban replied that Israel would first of all examine the results of Johnston's efforts, and if it realised that Johnston had no chance of success, it would resume the work.

Notes

1. See No. 71, n.1.
2. The remarks of William F. Knowland, leader of the Republican minority in the Senate, and Walter Franklin George, Democrat, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, were made to English journalists (See Eban to Sharett, Tel. 830, 6 February 1956, 93.01/2212/12).
3. See No. 68.
4. Eban reported that the British Ambassador Makins told him that among other things they would discuss the coordination of the responses to Israel's arms requests (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 841, 8 February 1956, 130.09/2311/7).

79. S. Kaddar (Prague) to the East European Division. 7 February 1956

In a talk with Kalicka, the Czech deputy foreign minister, the problems pending between Israel and Czechoslovakia were discussed. 1. With reference to the release of Oren,[1] he promised to transmit Israel's question concerning accelerating the handling of his release. 2. Immigration – he promised to look into delays, pointing out that the family reunification operation was continuing. 3. Trade agreement – they would shortly be delivering an answer to Israel's letter. They suggest first of all discussing financial claims and only after that discussing a new trade agreement. 4. Cultural relations[4] – he promised to discuss the whole issue.

Notes

1. This refers to the case of Mordechai Oren, and another Israeli citizen, Shimon Orenstein, who were arrested in Czechoslovakia towards the end of 1951. Their trial ended near the end of 1953. Oren was sentenced to 15 years in prison, and Orenstein to life. (On the affair see Vol. 7, No. 51; Vol. 8, No. 344.) There was an exchange of letters concerning them between the presidents of Israel and Czechoslovakia. In a letter dated 16 December 1953, President Ben-Zvi asked the Czech president Antonin Zapotocky to accede to the appeals for pardon made by the wives of the two prisoners. In Zapotocky's reply of November 1954 it said that Orenstein had already been freed, and that there was no possibility of acceding to the request to release Oren. In a second letter dated 29 November 1954 Ben-Zvi again asked to review the Oren case. In Zapotocky's reply, dated 24 January 1955, it said that instructions had been given to explore the possibility of granting a pardon to Oren, "who had been convicted according to the law" (The letters in file 130.11/2513/5).
   On 12 May 1956 the Israeli chargé d'affaires in Prague was informed that the public prosecutor had decided to cancel the period of imprisonment remaining for Oren and that he would be expelled upon his leaving prison (See Kaddar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 823, 12 May 1956, 130.11/2513/5).
2. In this letter Israel suggested discussing a new commercial treaty and general financial problems (See Kaddar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 742, 30 November 1955, 130.09/2343/5).
3. A copy of the letter, dated 13 March 1956, in File 130.11/2512/5. The negotiations, conducted in Prague in September 1956, ended inconclusively (See Migdal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others, 4 October 1956, 130.11/2512/5).
4. In November 1955 Israel rejected the Czech proposal to send a Czech musical quartet to Israel on the grounds that cultural ties had to be reciprocal (See Kaddar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 792, 30 November 1955, 130.02/2345/5).

80. Aide Mémoire by the Headquarters of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization. Jerusalem, 8 February 1956

Notes

1. See No. 35.
2. The Lake Tiberias incident on the night between 11-12 December 1955.
3. See No. 73.
4. The matter was discussed in a conversation between Sharett and Burns on 21 February, see No. 104.

81. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 8 February 1956

Coded Tel. 319; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a meeting with Roux in accordance with the division's telegram.[1] He said that the directives given to the French ambassador in Washington were to disassociate France from any declared plan of joint action of the Three Powers in the Middle East in the event of a conflict. Such a declaration would create a storm among the Arabs and opposition in Israel, would be interpreted as a fresh imperialist attack and would thereby strengthen the Russian position. They do not believe in military intervention in the framework of the U.N. because of the role of the Soviet Union in the organisation. Furthermore, the French do not believe in the effectiveness of increasing the number of U.N. observers, and would treat this proposal with caution. On the other hand, France would vigorously insist on restoring the arms balance and would demand the strengthening of Israel. If it was decided that the Western Powers would take joint measures in the event of aggression, it would have to be quite clear that these steps would not be prepared and not be seen as directed against Israel alone. In any case, the French would insist on their right to supply arms to Israel because they were convinced that the weapons that had already been supplied by them had prevented conflict until now.

Roux pointed out that the French memorandum had had a positive influence on the discussions in Washington,[2] and in fact the Americans had accepted its three main principles: not to expand the Baghdad Pact, preference for economic over military action and the inclusion of France in all the discussions.

Notes

1. The embassy was asked to obtain instructions to the French ambassador in Washington to stress in the course of the Three Power consultation the issue of the balance of arms as a prime condition for the preservation of Middle East security, whether there would be a guarantee from the Powers or not. France was also asked to speed up delivery of the Mystères following the American announcement that they had given France "an affirmative statement" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel Embassy in Paris, 7 February 1956, 130.09/2347/1). See also No.77, n. 2.
2. The content of the aide mémoire was given to Israel on 30 January. In it the French demanded concrete action by the Three Powers in the Middle East, expressed serious reservations about the Baghdad Pact and demanded that it be frozen, called for the economic development of the region and stated that Arab-Israeli peace was a precondition for any constructive activity in the region (See Tsur to the West European Division, Tel. 285, 30 January 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

82. F. E. Shinnar (Cologne) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 8 February 1956

Copy: 130.10/2539/4

Summary

Shinnar reports on developments with regard to the dispatch of the German trade delegation to Israel.[1] On 2 February he had met Boehm who told him about his meeting with Brentano. Brentano recommended caution in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. Boehm had also gained the impression that in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there were some officials who contended that granting consular authority to such a delegation was liable to be interpreted as establishing relations. Boehm promised to discuss this matter with Hallstein before Shinnar's conversation with him.

In the conversation with Hallstein the latter reiterated Boehm's remarks. Nonetheless, he stressed that in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there existed a positive attitude and a deep understanding of Israel, evidenced by their keeping to the reparations agreement in spite of all the Arab pressure. He emphasised that they would not allow the Arabs to influence them in the matter of establishing relations, but again reiterated that they must act with caution in order not to cause harm to both sides (he recalled the matter of the recognition of East Germany). He argued that Israel was benefiting from the good relations that they had with the Arabs in that they could intervene on behalf of Israel in the international arena in certain matters. Regarding the affair of the trade delegation, he said that the matter was under legal investigation and he would look into it in good time. Shinnar's conclusion

was that Hallstein too was hesitant about the delegation, and the Germans were apparently divided over this question.

Shinnar also reports on the visit of Dr. Goldmann who met with Erhardt and Adenauer. Goldmann had also gained the impression that there was hesitancy with regard to the delegation, and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was even a tendency to postpone its dispatch.

Shinnar sums up by saying that he would contact Brentano the following week to receive a clear answer regarding the delegation. In his opinion they must not exert pressure in the matter, so that the Germans would send the delegation as an act of favour, but on the other hand Israel must not agree to foot-dragging in this affair.

Notes

1. In File 130.02/2413/3.
2. For a report on this conversation, see Shinnar's telegram to Eytan, 29 November 1955, 130.10/2539/4.
3. In fact the conference did take place in Istanbul in April 1956.
4. See also No. 102, n. 3.
5. Sharett's reply – See No. 102.

83. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 10 February 1956

Coded Tel. IW616; Outg: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Sharett cables instructions prior to Eban's conversation with Dulles. There is a danger that Dulles will argue that sufficient time has not elapsed since their last talk[1] for him to make a clear statement. Eban must remind him that the two weeks which he talked about had passed, Dulles was already talking about an extra month, and there was no end in sight. Israel was seeking a clarification of the situation. In the meantime the Aswan issue had ended without any condition in Israel's favour being added to the agreement,[3] and this matter had also in the past served as a pretext for delaying the decision.

Notes

1. On 25 January – See No. 48.
2. These remarks were made in a conversation of the secretary with a Republican member of the House of Representatives, Hugh Scott, who headed a group of senators which had appealed to Dulles to speed up the supply of American arms to Israel (See Eban to the United States Division, 7 February 1956, WA838, 130.02/2455/9).
3. In December 1955 the United States, Britain and the World Bank agreed to help with the financing of the construction of the Aswan High dam (the cancellation of the agreement in July 1956 prompted Nasser to nationalise the Suez Canal).

84. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 10 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA855; Outg. 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban reports on the conversation with Dulles.

Dulles began by saying that even though there was no agreement between Israel and the United States with regard to the supply of arms, there was most definitely agreement concerning their goals, and these were the preservation of Israel and ensuring the security of the region. At the moment the United States believed that there were good chances of achieving an overall settlement through the measures it was taking, and it was a pity to forsake the chance of an overall settlement because of weapons that it would not be hard for it to supply if and when it became clear that approving the request for arms was the most effective way of stabilising the peace. Consequently, the United States was obliged to reserve for itself the right to decide when to approve Israel's demand for arms, since this demand was not excluded.

Eban replied that there was a sense of disappointment in Israel. Any plan adopted by the Three Powers could not be a substitute for defensive weapons. Every additional delay would adversely affect the attempt to calm the region. The non-supply of arms by the United States was silencing others who wished to assist Israel. He was critical of the secretary's letter of 6 February[1] which was on the whole negative and there was no consistency between his basic assumptions and its conclusions.

The secretary said that he would still study and discuss the problem that Israel had presented. He had to point out that he was not altogether disappointed with the examinations that had been made recently on the prospects for a settlement, although the process was long drawn out. In his estimation, the danger that Israel would be attacked had lessened considerably in the past few months. He repeated his promise that the United States was

working energetically to ensure the existence of Israel in all its essentials. He reiterated his doctrine that there was no future for Israel when it was surrounded by enemies and that they must work for a settlement; if he came to the conclusion that there was no chance of a settlement he would adopt interim measures of the supply of a certain amount of defensive weaponry to Israel and other security measures.

Eban responded that he preferred the term "Israel just as it is" to "in all its essentials." Dulles replied that he agreed, but noted that in the armistice agreements it also spoke of possible amendments to the armistice lines by consent. Eban replied that Israel was now Israel of the armistice borders and it had to be safeguarded. If there were agreed changes – it would be necessary to preserve that Israel. Eban had the impression that he agreed with this comment.

Towards the end of his remarks the secretary commented that he had noticed the beginning of active political pressure on Israel's behalf. He did not know if the embassy or the Israeli government was responsible for this. Such activity was missing its mark and was liable to increase the Administration's stubbornness. Eban replied that he was unable to respond, but he mentioned that throughout the world there were those who were concerned for Israel's existence and security.

In conclusion Eban returned to the question of arms and said that if there was a problem about approving Israel's request publicly, Israel was also prepared to accept a quiet implementation of its most pressing demand – planes. Dulles replied that he would take this into consideration in his discussions prior to his departure.

Notes

1. The Dulles letter to the members of Congress regarding the issue of arms to Israel. See No. 77, n. 3.
2. See No. 83.
3. In November 1956 presidential elections were due to be held in the United States.
4. The meetings were held on 26 and 30 October 1955 – see No. 22, notes 3 and 4.
5. Should be: 6 February – See No. 77.

85. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 10 February 1956

Coded Tel. 325; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau, which he described as "good." Pineau was disappointed by the report he had received on the Three Power talks in Washington;[1] fresh proposals had not been presented and it would be necessary to call for new consultations at the highest level. He complained that the Americans were pressing France to be the supplier of arms to Israel at a time when the French themselves were entangled in North Africa and had to act with caution in the Arab states and particularly in Egypt. Tsur replied that the independent position adopted by France in its memorandum[2] had already enhanced its diplomatic standing, deterred the Arabs and was helping peace.

Pineau also spoke about the water scheme. He suggested convening an Arab-Israeli conference regarding the Johnston scheme. He knew that the Arabs would oppose it but the Powers had to bring the issue to a joint discussion. He asked Israel to delay the beginning of the diversion work until he had time to present a practical proposal. Tsur promised to relay his request to the government, but pointed out that Israel would make two conditions: that the delay should be for a short time, and that Israel's right to set up an irrigation plant without dependence on Arab agreement be recognised. Pineau replied that he acknowledges the justice of this claim, and Israel's right to use the waters of the Jordan according to its needs could not be challenged.

Notes

1. See No. 71, n. 1.
2. See No. 81 and n. 2 there.
3. Tsur reported that Pineau had complained to him that the Americans had given their agreement in principle for the sale of the Mystères, but had still not supplied the technical license which must be given by the Special Off-Shore Procurement Department in the Pentagon (See Tsur's telegram to the West European Division, 10 February 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

86. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 11 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA857; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban reports on a number of conversations that he and his colleagues had had in the United States in addition to the talk with Dulles.[1]

In a conversation with Allen they only touched on the issue of the Mystères and he promised to remove the last technical obstacle, namely, obtaining the permit from the Off-Shore Department.

In a conversation with Johnston[2] it transpired that he wished to resume his activity as an independent and separate initiative. His motives were the approach of spring and the danger of complications arising in the field, and his scepticism about the Anderson mission. He hoped that Israel would support his position.

From two conversations with Russell and from Shiloah's conversation with Kermit Roosevelt the following picture emerges:
1. Anderson emerged encouraged from his talks with Nasser, and he believed that he should hold a second round of talks in order to bring about the meeting. 2. He had been impressed by the meeting with Ben-Gurion and Sharett, but was disappointed by the refusal to state positions explicitly on some secondary issues. He believes that in order to attract Nasser to a meeting he had to present him with some opportunities, not necessarily involving the cardinal issues of borders and refugees. Eban and Shiloah replied that Israel's positions had been spelled out in writing on various occasions including Sharett's letter to Dulles.[5] He replied that he wished to rely only upon what had been said to him in the course of his mission.
3. Shiloah took advantage of his talk with Roosevelt to inform Allen Dulles of the contents of Sharett's telegram No. 617.[6] Russell had been told the same thing. They would return to this matter in a direct conversation with Allen Dulles and with Anderson himself.
4. Anderson returned to the United States under the assumption that the president would be receiving letters from both Ben-Gurion and Nasser. Nasser's letter was on the way and they were expecting Ben-Gurion's letter containing a promise of cooperation with Anderson.
5. Serious discussions had taken place on the question of Nasser's sincerity or whether he was acting deceitfully. Hoover and Roosevelt were among the doubters, the State Department favoured Nasser's sincerity.
6. The general opinion was that at this stage the Anderson mission must not be undermined by the demonstrative dispatch of arms to Israel. In today's consultations they would discuss the proposal to find a way to begin a quiet,

practical and timely discussion at least of the urgent question of the supply of planes. Shiloah spoke with Russell and Roosevelt about this matter.

Eban sums up saying that they must hurry up Ben-Gurion's letter to the president as agreed, and that it should highlight Israel's anxiety and expectation over the arms.[8]

Notes

1. See No. 84.
2. See Shiloah's report on this conversation, in the course of which Johnston also said that he was hoping to obtain the support of the governments of the United States, Britain and France for a plan of action within a week (See Shiloah to Herzog, Tel. WIA859, 11 February 1956, 93.01/2213/7).
3. See No. 87.
4. See No. 76.
5. On 30 December 1955 Eban handed Dulles a letter from Sharett in which Israel gave its agreement to the Anderson mission. Among other things it said that Ben-Gurion agreed to meet for negotiations with Nasser without preconditions (See *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XIV, No. 472, n. 3).
6. Sharett's telegram to Eban (10 February 1956, 93.01/2213/7) in which he instructs him to meet "for a serious talk" with Allen Dulles and to tell him that the fear that Israel had at the time that the Anderson mission would serve as a pretext to postpone the supply of arms without providing any opening for an alternative solution was being confirmed. If vigorous steps were not immediately taken to repair the arms balance Israel would be compelled to reconsider the whole matter.
7. See No. 91.
8. In another telegram to Sharett, sent immediately after the telegram above, Eban wrote: "There is no doubt at all according to our conversation yesterday, that Jonathan [Anderson] is opposed to any fresh development with regard to the arms just now for fear that it could prejudice his mission. This was told us explicitly by Ben [Kermit Roosevelt] (WIA858, 11 February 1956, 93.01/2213/7).

87. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 12 February 1956.

Coded Tel. WIA861; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban reports on a private consultation held in Dulles' house the previous day. The information was supplied by Kermit Roosevelt who was present.

Present at the consultation were: the secretary of state, Hoover, Anderson, Allen Dulles, Allen, Russell and Roosevelt. Prior to the consultation

Roosevelt spoke with Allen Dulles, and gave him the draft of a letter written by Eban which was meant for the secretary of state. The draft was, in Eban's words, full of repressed anger, and contained a forceful warning about the responsibility that the secretary of state was assuming by withholding arms from Israel. On second thoughts Eban and Shiloah had changed their minds about sending it, and it was handed privately to Roosevelt for him to hand it to Allen Dulles. Allen Dulles confided this to his brother.

During the consultation the secretary of state informed those present regarding the mood of the draft of Eban's letter. He said that he was distressed by this, and did not know how he would hold his head up if things went wrong. He turned to Anderson and asked that he explain to Nasser that the responsibility was beginning to weigh on him almost unbearably and in the near future he would have to free himself from it by approving Israel's request. He also called for all the obstacles for the implementation of the Mystère deal to be removed. He added that he acknowledged Israel's argument that until the United States itself lifted the taboo on the supply of arms to Israel, Israel would be unable to purchase arms in other parts of the free world. In spite of this, Roosevelt sums up, even now the United States would not supply arms until Anderson had held the second round of his mission.

During the conversation Hoover burst out, arguing that Nasser was deceitful and a broken reed, and had completely sold out to the enemy, and why did the United States have to support him and his country. Dulles replied that geopolitical factors determined Egypt's leadership of the Arab world and this fact could not be ignored. At the same time it was up to Anderson always to mention the threat of the United States joining the Baghdad Pact and this represented a powerful card in the negotiations.

According to Roosevelt's summing up no final decisions had been taken yet, but the atmosphere was positive and Israel now had a greater chance of receiving arms than before the consultation.

Notes

1. See No. 84.
2. See No. 91.

88. Editorial Note

The Soviet Declaration of 13 February on the Middle East

On 13 February 1956 the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its response to the joint American-British statement issued after the Eisenhower-Eden talks in Washington (See No.71, n. 2).

The Soviet declaration points out that the talks and the joint statement indicate an attempt to impose on the Middle Eastern states the will of foreign circles, whose interests are alien to the national aspirations of the peoples in that area. The efforts of the Western countries to expand the Baghdad Pact are designed to broaden the military plans of the Western states in the region and only exacerbate the tension. The claim that the signatories to the declaration desire the settlement of the conflict between Israel and its neighbours is incorrect. If this were the case, the declaration asserts, why were the decisions taken without the participation of the countries concerned and behind their backs? Particularly worrisome are the reports in the press about the intention to introduce into the region the armies of certain powers. It is to be hoped that clarifications will be forthcoming in this regard which will allay the fears of the Middle Eastern countries on this question.

The declaration concludes with the following:

In the declaration of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 16 April 1955 it was stressed that the Soviet Union cannot view with equanimity the situation currently prevailing in the Middle East, since this matter has a direct relevance to the security of the Soviet Union, which is situated in the vicinity of the region, unlike certain other Powers.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union finds it imperative to declare again that any act leading to complications in the Middle East and to increased tension there is bound to be the subject of legitimate concern on the part of the Soviet Government.

Such an act as the dispatch of foreign troops into the area of the Middle Eastern countries without the consent of these countries and without the sanction of the Security Council, which is the institution that bears the main responsibility for the preservation of peace, will constitute a gross violation of the U.N. Charter and of the sovereignty of a number of countries.

The Soviet government hopes that this position will meet with complete understanding and support on the part of all peace-loving states interested in the preservation of the peace, security and territorial integrity of the countries of the Middle East.

As for the Soviet government, it will continue, whilst remaining faithful to the principles of its foreign policy, which seeks peace, to defend the issue of peace, to defend the liberty and independence of the countries of

the Middle East and non-intervention in their internal affairs: it will also continue, together with other states concerned, to assist in reinforcing security in this region (See the text of the declaration in *Al Hamishmar*, 15 February 1956; also in File 130.11/2505/23).

In a briefing of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its missions abroad, following the Soviet declaration, it said that it was not aimed against Israel, and constituted a continuation of the Soviet attempt to gain a firm foothold in the Middle East. The fact that the Eisenhower-Eden statement served as a pretext for the Soviet declaration reinforces Israel's demand for arms (The briefing in File 130.02/3694/2).

89. Report by B. Duvdevani. Jerusalem, 13 February 1956

Copy: 130.10/2520/8

Summary

Duvdevani writes about the situation in Morocco, the situation of the Jews, local Jewish institutions, foreign Jewish institutions operating in the country, the future of the Jewish Agency and emigration and the situation of Jews living in remote villages. His conclusions are that the continuation of Jewish emigration from that country is in danger, and particularly that of young people and people with capital. Consequently, emigration, particularly of young people and the inhabitants of the remote villages, had to be speeded up. The continuation of the work of the Jewish Agency and the team of emissaries was also in danger. This meant sending there only emissaries possessing a non-Israeli passport.

Notes

1. The Sultan of Morocco, Mohammed Bin Yussuf (later to become King Mohammed V) was exiled by the French to Madagascar on 20 August 1953. He was brought back to his country on the eve of its gaining independence on 16 November 1955. The first government of Morocco was formed by Si Bekkai on 7 December 1955.
2. Israel's congratulatory message was delivered at the beginning of March by Tsur to the Moroccan crown prince, Mullay Hassan (See Tsur to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 434, 5 March 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
3. On 3 May 1956 Israel hosted a conference of Mediterranean region citrus fruit growers. Moroccan representatives participated in the conference.
4. See No. 28.
5. See ibid, n. 5.

6. No report was found on the Goldmann-Tsur conversation or on a Goldmann visit to Morocco, and presumably such a visit did not take place. On the other hand a report on the visit of the member of the World Jewish Congress, G. Riegner, to Morocco between 9 and 17 February was traced (In File 130.02/2388/6).

90. Note from the Israel Legation in Sofia to the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 14 February 1956

Notes

1. Text of the letter in "Reports to the Israel Missions Abroad," No. 1063, 8 August 1955, 130.02/2422/2.
2. Text of the letter in "Reports to the Israel Missions Abroad," No. 1057, 31 July 1955, ibid.
3. The Israeli commission of inquiry was already appointed on the day the plane was shot down, 27 July 1955. Its report was presented to the Minister of Transport Moshe Carmel on 18 August 1955 (In File 130.04/1880/5). The commission determined that the cause of the crash was not a deviation from the flight route, but "the aggressive action of the Bulgarian fighters which shot down the plane."
4. After Israel's efforts to receive compensation from Bulgaria for the relatives of the victims of the plane tragedy came to nothing, on 18 October 1957 it filed a claim against Bulgaria to the International Court of Justice in the Hague. On 26 May 1959 the Court accepted the Bulgarian claim that it did not have authority to try the case. Negotiation was resumed between the Israeli and Bulgarian governments which ended on 20 May 1963, when the Israeli legation in Bulgaria received a cheque for the sum of 195,000 dollars as compensation for the families of the victims.

91. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to President Eisenhower (Washington). 14 February 1956

Notes

1. This letter was not found, but see No. 14.
2. See No. 15 and n.11 there.
3. For Eisenhower's reply see No. 112.

92. West European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Paris. 15 February 1956

Coded Tel. 690; Outg: 130.09/2347/1

Summary

Najar reports on his meeting with Gilbert, who informed him of the contents of the telegram he had received from Paris containing a request for Israel to delay the resumption of work in the Jordan river bed in view of the tense situation in the region. France stressed its friendship for Israel, its hope for the supply of the Mystères in the near future and its hope that a display of prudence on the part of Israel would help France to act in Syria and especially in the Three Power discussions.

Najar said that he was surprised by the remarks, especially since there was no reference to the proposal of the minister of foreign affairs with regard to an appeal from France or the Powers in Damascus and Cairo to speed up approval of the Johnston plan.[1] Gilbert replied that it was not a matter of an indefinite delay and the point was to allocate a minimal amount of time for diplomatic action and also to ensure that the resumption of the work would not be interpreted as blind stubbornness, which would not help Israel's political struggle and its request for arms.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 67.
2. In a further report Najar added that Gilbert had stressed that France's participation in the Three Power talks gave Israel the opportunity to present its position sympathetically, therefore it was important to clarify exactly what Israel thought about such problems as the expansion of U.N. personnel in Israel or the participation of the Russians in Middle Eastern affairs. Najar replied that any significant change in U.N. personnel would require the agreement of all the parties. As to the participation of Russia, he replied that this was not dependent on Israel but on the Powers themselves (See Najar to Tsur, 15 February 1956, 130.10/2530/3).
   In answer to the above telegram, Tsur pointed out that Gilbert's remarks that "France is not an American tool vis-à-vis Israel" represented a new trend in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the government which gave a rare opportunity to exploit this mood for the implementation of the arms procurement programmes and increasing French influence on Three Power policy. Therefore he recommended postponing the work in the Jordan river channel. It would be appropriate to do so in response to Pineau's appeal, after Israel had let him officially announce his proposal to convene a meeting of the Arab states and Israel to discuss the water problem (See Israel embassy in Paris, Tel. 348, 16 February 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

93. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.[1]
16 February 1956

Orig.: 130.11/2497/1

Summary

Tsur writes to Sharett on his conversation with Shaul Avigur concerning the public campaign on the issue of Russian Jewry.[2] Tsur distinguishes between public activity on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union aimed at strengthening communal and religious life in the Soviet Union and the activity designed to bring the Jews of the Soviet Union to Israel. Whereas Avigur requested that public activity should be conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that is to say by the embassy, Tsur thinks that this activity should be conducted by Jewish public or religious bodies, with no clear connection with Israel. Activity conducted by an official body like the embassy would be perceived by the Soviets as subversion and would be counterproductive. On the other hand, the struggle for emigration was a political matter and should be conducted at the level of relations between states.

Notes

1. Copies were sent to A. Harman, deputy director-general of the Ministry, Y. Avidar, the ambassador in Moscow, and S. Avigur.
2. In the first half of 1956 Israel decided to set up an organisation that would draw the Western public's attention to the plight of the Jews in the Soviet Union and in the other states of Eastern Europe, and the need to recognise their right to immigrate to Israel. Israel did not want an official body like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be associated with this activity, for fear that if official Israeli involvement were revealed, the number of bodies in the West that could be enlisted in support of the public campaign on behalf of the Soviet and East European Jews would be significantly reduced. The task was therefore assigned to a department set up in the framework of "Nativ," the body that dealt with Soviet and East European Jewry and their immigration to Israel. This department was given the name "Bar" (See A. Boaz, *Unseen Yet Always Present: The Life Story of Shaul Avigur*, pp. 292-293 [Hebrew]).

94. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 17 February 1956

Coded Tel. 641; 130.09/2311/5

Summary

The division reports on the conversation between the minister of foreign affairs and the United States Ambassador, Lawson. Three topics were discussed: 1.The grant-in-aid[1] – Sharett maintained that the United States had reduced the grant to Israel to 20 million dollars (of which 15 million dollars were in food surpluses and only 5 in cash), as against 40 million last year. On the other hand Egypt was being granted 55 million. 2. The visit by ships of the Sixth Fleet.[2] Sharett asked whether the visit was a courtesy visit and whether the ships would also visit Egypt, because if not, all kinds of undesirable interpretations were liable to arise. Lawson promised to check with the State Department. 3. Supply of arms – Sharett reiterated Israel's position and stressed that public tension had not abated. Lawson asked if the tendency was to see in arms the focal point of all the problems. The minister replied affirmatively. To Lawson's question whether increasing the grant would calm the public with regard to the arms issue, Sharett replied that the link between the two problems was the discriminatory attitude adopted towards Israel by comparison with Egypt.

Notes

1. See No. 74 and n. 1 there.
2. The request to approve the visit of the ships was presented to Israel on 13 February. After clarification with the Department of State, Ambassador Lawson announced that this would be a courtesy visit, and that the ships of the Sixth Fleet would also pay courtesy visits to other ports including Egypt (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Washington, Tel. 642, 17 February 1956, 130.09/2311/5).
3. See No. 15, n. 11.
4. In his reply to the members of the House of Representatives who requested the supply of defensive arms for Israel – See No. 77, n. 3.
5. See No. 77.

97. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 19 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA885; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Anderson. The latter told him that he was soon going to return to Cairo and from there to Jerusalem. He would concentrate all his efforts on arranging a meeting[1] and raised various possibilities, including a meeting at a lower level than prime minister. He said that he had received instructions to emphasise to Nasser that the United States government could not bear the moral responsibility for denying defensive weapons to Israel for long. Perhaps this was as a result of Saturday's consultation.[2] It transpired from the conversation that he attached great hopes to the prime minister's remarks that in the event of a meeting he would surprise him by his strenuous efforts to obtain a settlement. Eban's impression was that he believed that Israel would make concessions in the Negev, and he tried to disabuse him of the notion.

In a conversation with Johnston the latter told him that Anderson had indeed interpreted Ben-Gurion's words thus. In Johnston's opinion, the mission had no chance of success, and the way out was to concentrate on the water plan, restoring the arms balance and a firm Three Power guarantee, and only after that, in the summer, to return to the peace initiative.

Notes

1. Between Nasser and Ben-Gurion. See No. 54.
2. See No. 86.
3. No. 91.
4. See No. 76.

98. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 21 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA896; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban tells of a secret visit he paid to Hoover (also present were Shiloah, Murphy and Russell). He solemnly handed over the prime minister's letter to the president[1] and added some remarks orally. He emphasised Israel's favourable impression of the initiative of the president and his envoy, but

its deep-seated scepticism with regard to Nasser and his intentions. He said that Nasser had no real feeling towards the United States, nor to the Soviet Union or to world peace, but his whole approach was one of extortion and manoeuvring. He again stressed the pressing urgency for arms, and said that withholding them was hampering the mission and not vice versa, since it was preferable to negotiate from a position of strength.

Hoover said that he would deliver the letter to the secretary of state and also to the president when he returned from his vacation. The Administration attached great importance to the mission. Anderson would return to the region in a week's time. He was interested in all that had been said about Nasser and asked that all testimony concerning this view be conveyed to the intelligence institutions of the United States. The discussion then passed to the subjects of arms and the Johnston plan, but this will be explained in a separate telegram.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 91.
2. On 19 February Nasser made a speech at the conclusion of an air cadets course. Among other things he said that Egypt was not afraid of "a spring attack" by Israel. It would stand shoulder to shoulder with Syria against any Israeli threat, and aggression against Syria would be considered as aggression against Egypt (*Jerusalem Post*, 20 February 1956.)
3. To influence Syria to accept the Johnston plan, see No. 95.
4. See No. 15, n.11.
5. See No. 99.

99. A. Eban (Washington) to J. Herzog. 21 February 1956

Coded Tel.: WIA895; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

In a conversation with Hoover the matter of the supply of tanks to Saudi Arabia was discussed.[1] Hoover said that there had been no alternative except to supply the tanks, otherwise the Saudis would have turned to the Soviets and driven the Americans out of Dahran.[2] He asked if Israel had taken these considerations into account. Eban replied that if Hoover paid attention to the remarks of the embassy and to Eban's public statements he would see that the emphasis all the time was not on the tanks to Saudi Arabia but on the continued deadlock in dealing with Israel's request. The dispatch of the tanks against the background of the deadlock had caused shock throughout

102. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to F.E. Shinnar (Cologne). 22 February 1956

Copy: 130.02/2413/3

Summary

Sharett responds to Shinnar's cables of 31 January[1] and 8 February[2] and suggests to him lines of argument for his forthcoming talk with Brentano.

The position adopted by the Bonn government regarding its ties with Israel signals a total retreat from the line it had taken on approving reparations and causes Israel great disappointment. It appeared that Bonn had retreated not only from the intention to establish diplomatic relations but also from the intention to send a consular-trade delegation. In contrast to the approach of Adenauer, who had not bowed to Arab pressures and had implemented the reparations agreement, the German Foreign Ministry has recently been adopting a new and discriminatory line towards Israel. There were two aspects to the German discriminatory line: (a) making ties with Israel dependent on the agreement of the Arab states, at a time when Germany maintains normal relations with these countries without having set any condition for their relations with Israel, and (b) arguing that establishing relations with Israel would push the Arab countries in the direction of the Soviet bloc. The second aspect was particularly grave since it opened the way for pressure on Germany on the part of the Arabs as well as other states, and did not guarantee that in the end the Arabs would not attach themselves to the Eastern bloc.

In his next conversation Shinnar must come out against this new line. He must point out that Israel and its government had made great efforts since the signing of the reparations agreement to exercise political wisdom and foresight above emotionalism. The news that it was Germany that was delaying the normalisation of relations would once more arouse and inflame public controversy, especially since Israel was engaged in a continuous process of developing ties and connections with that country. Israel had no alternative at this stage but to adopt a sharp position and to express it quite unambiguously. In spite of the fact that Israel was today dependent on Germany more than Germany depended on it, and in spite of the winds that were blowing today in Germany which meant that there was no absolute certainty about the continuation of the reparations agreement, Israel must emphatically demand the dispatch of the consular-trade delegation and not exhibit weakness in this matter. With regard to diplomatic relations, on the other hand, it should be explained that they would follow at a later stage.[11]

Notes

1. In File 130.02/2413/3.
2. No. 82.
3. In a telegram which Goldmann sent (from New York) to Sharett on 13 February it said that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn wishes to postpone the formation of the trade delegation for a few months. I spoke with 'the Old Man' (Adenauer) and he will give an instruction to speed it up" (The telegram, No. 15, in File 130.10/2539/4). See also No. 82.
4. No. 59.
5. In File 130.02/2413/3.
6. See No. 82.
7. In addition to this, the Israeli government decided on 22 January to abolish the restriction "apart from Germany" in Israeli passports.
8. In February 1956 Austria and Israel decided to establish diplomatic relations, and their general consulates were raised to the status of legations.
9. On 31 January 1956 the Italian minister in Israel, who was raised to the rank of ambassador in the wake of the decision by the two countries to raise the level of diplomatic ties between them from legations to embassies, presented his credentials as ambassador to the president of Israel in Jerusalem.
10. See No. 82.
11. Shinnar replied that he would act according to the guidelines he had received. Even prior to receiving the guidelines he had spoken with Blankenhorn and apprised him of the gravity of the situation. The latter had promised to talk with Adenauer. He was planning to approach Ollenhauer via a contact, so that Ollenhauer should draw Brentano's attention to the position of the Social Democrat Party which would not stand for losing the opportunity to make progress on the issue of relations. The meeting with Brentano himself was postponed, but in the meantime Shinnar was in touch with his people (See Shinnar to Sharett, Tel. 328, 25 February 1956, 130.02/2413/3).

103. J. Tsur (Paris) to W. Eytan and the Latin American Division. 22 February 1956

Coded Tel. 375; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports that, in accordance with the ministry's instructions, he had contacted the Spanish ambassador about establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and Spain.[1] The ambassador had consulted with his minister of foreign affairs and replied that the time was not yet ripe for relations. Spain did not have any negative attitude towards Israel but it could only establish relations on two conditions: the improvement of relations with the Arab states and the internationalisation of Jerusalem. Tsur replied that

Spain's entry into the U.N. and the aggravated situation in the Middle East obliged Spain to be conscious of the positions of all the parties involved and not to maintain contact with one side only. Relations with Israel did not mean the weakening of ties with the Arab states, and many countries maintained ties with both sides. Regarding Jerusalem, he said that it was not only Israel's opposition that had thwarted the internationalisation but that Jordan had a similar attitude. Israel was opposed to internationalisation but had declared on many occasions that it was prepared to give guarantees for the protection of the holy sites and freedom of access to them. The Spanish ambassador listened and it was agreed that his answer was not final and there would be further contacts.

Note

1. On Israel's relations with Spain see Vol. 9, No. 44. In the first years after its establishment Israel adopted a negative approach towards Spain, did not request its recognition and opposed (in 1949 and in 1950) draft resolutions in the U.N. Assembly calling for the lifting of diplomatic sanctions against Spain. In the course of the years, with Spain's growing importance, Israel changed its attitude. In December 1955 Israel supported the draft resolution in the General Assembly calling for Spain's admission into the U.N. On 8 January 1956 the government decided to authorise the minister of foreign affairs to do everything needed for the establishment of diplomatic ties with Spain. Following this decision Tsur was requested to approach the Spanish ambassador in Paris and to inform him that Israel was seeking to establish diplomatic relations with Spain (See Eytan to Tsur, Tel. 609, 18 January 1956, 130.09/2347/1).

104. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 23 February 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 449; Outg: 130.16/2951/8

Summary

Tekoah reports on Burns' meeting with Sharett which dealt with a number of topics on the agenda between Israel and the U.N.

1. On Nitzana, Burns was told that he would soon receive Israel's answer to the secretary-general's proposal.[1] Burns understood from this that the answer was not positive and seemed disappointed. Sharett added that Israel distinguished between the adoption of resolutions and their implementation and here there were problems requiring clarification.

2. The exchange of prisoners with Syria.[5] Burns stated that the Syrians claimed that they only held four prisoners. He suggested exchanging the prisoners without delay, and afterwards continuing to verify whether there were other Israelis in Syria as Israel claimed. Sharett replied that Israel could not abandon its people and demanded a general prisoner exchange.
3. Lake Tiberias. Burns asked for Israel's position regarding the two proposals that remained unresolved: pumping of water by the Syrians and keeping the police boats away from the north-eastern shore. Sharett replied that the matter of pumping was never problematic. With regard to the boats, Israel made this conditional on a similar distancing of the Syrian outposts. In this connection Burns mentioned his proposal for the distancing of patrols along the Gaza Strip border. Sharett replied that Israel regarded these patrols as vital; they moved routinely and did not open fire.
4. The resumption of activities of the Israel-Syria armistice commission.[7] It was agreed that, following the prisoner exchange, meetings would resume.
5. Benot Yaaqov. Burns asked what Israel's position was with regard to the resumption of work in the Jordan river channel. The minister replied that if Johnston did not obtain an agreement within two to three weeks, Israel would consider itself free to resume the work. Syria must understand that it could not have the best of both worlds – to oppose both the Johnston plan and the Israeli work on the Jordan river channel. Burns was silent and finally mentioned Bennike's order to halt the work, and commented that it was still in force. Sharett rejected this interpretation out of hand and Burns hastened to add that on this matter he was subject to directives that were under constant review.

Notes

1. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.
2. See No. 111.
3. See No. 56.
4. Dated 4 January 1956, in which he conveyed Israel's agreement to Hammarsjköld's proposals of 3 November 1955. See No. 11 and n. 1 there.
5. On the night between 8-9 December 1954 a five-man squad of soldiers set out to deal with a listening installation connected with the phone lines in Syria. This squad was taken prisoner, and one of its soldiers (Uri Ilan) committed suicide. On the affair see Vol. 9, No. 563 (Editorial Note).
6. See No. 54, n. 6.
7. Israel had boycotted sessions of the Israel-Syria Armistice Commission ever since Syria had refused to implement the Commission's resolution of 12 January 1955 calling on it to return to Israel "as soon as possible" the soldiers who had fallen into Syrian captivity. These four soldiers, as well as an Israeli civilian, were returned to Israel on 29 March 1956 in return for 41 Syrian P.O.W.s in Israel's hands.
8. The resumption of the diversion work in the Jordan river channel – See No. 95.

105. Editorial Note

The Secretary of State's Statement at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 24 February on U.S. Policy in the Middle East.

On 24 February 1956 Dulles issued a statement to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on United States policy in the Middle East, and especially towards Israel.
See below for its main points:

The United States does not believe that true peace [between Israel and its Arab neighbours] can be based on arms alone. In the long term Israel's security will be ensured by other factors, such as the United Nations, through which Israel was established, the Tripartite Declaration of May 1950 and the Eisenhower-Eden statement at the conclusion of their talks in January 1956. The United States does not exclude the possibility of selling arms to Israel, when this will help in preserving peace, and does not exclude the possibility of selling arms to the Arab states under the same conditions. As for giving guarantees for borders, it is vital first to agree what those borders are. Dulles stressed that Israel's borders are temporary.

Dulles briefly summarised his remarks of 26 August 1955 that in order to achieve peace between Israel and its neighbours three main problems had to be resolved: the Palestinian Arab refugees, the fear that Israel and the Arab states had of each other and the absence of permanent borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

After his statement Dulles answered the senators' questions. For the text of his remarks and some of his replies to questions see in "Reports to the Israel Missions Abroad," No. 1115, 28 February 1956 (in File 130.20/2475/5). These remarks are based on the text given by the American news agency USIS, but it turns out that his remarks in response to a question concerning a defence treaty with Israel were not quoted. According to the *Jerusalem Post* of 26 February he said that despite the negotiations two years ago, the United States "had never seriously considered" giving Israel a defence treaty.

106. A. Eban [Washington] to the U.S. Secretary of State (Washington). 24 February 1956

Notes

1. See No. 91.
2. See No. 98.

3. The request was presented by Eban to Acting Secretary of State Hoover, on 16 November 1955.
4. See No. 84, n. 4.

107. D. Hacohen (Rangoon) to M. Sharett. 24 February 1956

Coded Tel. 418; Inc.: 130.02/2415/22

Summary

Hacohen reports that in a series of meetings the Israeli delegation[1] had made proposals in the sphere of agriculture (for cultivation of a million acres of wheat, maize, soya), regional planning and irrigation to be carried out by Israel, training 50 farmers in Israel, a geological survey, setting up a joint contracting company, joint shipping, general assistance with technicians and scientific cooperation, aerial mapping. The proposals were warmly welcomed; a positive response to some of them was expected.

Notes

1. Following the talks held by the Burmese head of state U Nu during his visit to Israel in June 1955, an Israeli delegation was invited to visit Rangoon to discuss economic cooperation between the two states. The delegation, headed by Knesset member David Hacohen, arrived in Burma in November 1956, and in March signed a general agreement including among other things the establishment of joint enterprises and the provision of technical assistance by Israel to Burma (Text of the agreement in *Rashumoth*, (Treaties) [Hebrew], No. 228, 12 April 1957).
2. See No. 147.

108. A. Eban (Washington) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 25 February 1956

Coded Tel. 921; Outg: 130.09/2811/7

Summary

Eban analyses Dulles' announcement to the Committee.[1] It comprised two sections almost word for word from his announcements of 6 February 1956[2] and that of 26 August.[3] Despite many questions he had reiterated his position that there were ongoing efforts to assess the chances of peace and therefore it was not an appropriate time for the sale of arms.

It was desirable that Jerusalem should react sharply to the argument that the difference in size of the populations meant that there was no possibility of Israel's being able to defend itself. This argument was in fact the only one which Dulles relied upon and in spite of its absurdity he was persuading naive people. Eban notes that he will exploit the secretary's appearance to increase public pressure. He will talk with Allen today.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 105 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 77, n. 3.
3. In a speech before the American Council on Foreign Relations on 26 August 1955 Dulles spoke about the Arab-Israel conflict, and pointed out three main problems that had to be resolved: the refugee problem, the problem of both sides' mutual fear of one another and the problem of the borders. He said that the refugee problem had to be resolved by settling them in their places of residence, and where possible, by returning them to Palestine. Israel had to compensate the refugees, and for this an international loan had to be raised which would help Israel to pay the compensation. President Eisenhower would recommend a significant contribution by the United States to such a loan as well as American participation in water and irrigation projects which would help with the resettling of the refugees. The problem of mutual fear had to be resolved by formal agreements with the participation of the United States, other countries and the U.N. in the framework of which the sides would undertake not to change the borders by force. However before they reached mutual guarantee of the borders they must first reach agreement on their demarcation, and here he pointed out that the current borders as determined under the armistice agreements were not designed to be permanent (The full text, published by the United States Information Service in Israel, in File 130.02/2455/4).
4. See No. 99, n. 1.
5. See No. 109, see also No. 115.

109. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 25 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA972; Outg: 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban cabled about two conversations he had after the disappointing appearance of the secretary of state,[1] one with Russell and the other with Allen.

In his conversation with Russell he complained about the secretary's remarks and said that he intended cabling his government and advising it to stop hoping that it would receive American arms, and to plan its moves

accordingly. This was a difficult conclusion, but a clear knowledge of the situation was better than none, and it would imbue Israel with the spiritual strength to increase its efforts. At the same time he fears that there will be a growing tendency to seek salvation in other places, and perhaps it would also sharpen the resolve to force the issue on all manner of problems, although Israel would not launch a pre-emptive war. Russell entreated Eban not to send the telegram, and said that in fact no negative decision had been taken.

The conversation with Allen was more productive. Allen said that the secretary of state's attitude to the sale of arms was more positive than would appear from his remarks, and that he had been carried away by his opponents' questions and had had to defend himself. The United States would sell arms to Israel, but the matter was being delayed because it wanted to explore the possibility of a settlement. He promised to arrange a meeting with the secretary and would make an effort to get the secretary to make a statement along these lines, since this was in fact the decision and the position. Eban complained that the secretary's remarks would deter other states who wished to help Israel. Allen replied that the intention of the United States was actually the reverse and the secretary's text in fact had not taken into consideration its impact on others. He recalled the United States' action in the case of the Mystères[4] and said that it should not be viewed as an isolated step but as carefully considered policy.

Notes

1. See No. 108.
2. In fact Lawson was summoned for a conversation with Ben-Gurion on 29 February – See No. 117.
3. See No. 99, n.1.
4. Allen denied a report which had appeared in the *New York Times* charging France with responsibility for the delays in carrying out the Mystère deal, and explained that the United States supported the sale of the planes. In Eban's estimation, the source of the leak was in the State Department and it was designed to present the United States in a positive light as concerned for Israel's security (See Eban to the United States Division WPTA81, 25 February 1956, 93.01/2212/12).

110. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 26 February 1956

Coded Tel. 726; Outg: 130.09/2847/1

Summary

Sharett replies to Tsur's telegram proposing to expand the framework of political ties with France, over and above the arms deals.[1] They must be careful lest the talk of political plans divert the attention from the immediate problem which is arms. The only way to prevent a flare-up is to restore the balance of power. Israel hopes that France will take the initiative and adopt an independent position, which will raise its prestige in both the East and the West. With regard to the plans proposed by Tsur, he approves of the Pineau mediation in the matter of Israel-India relations. As for Syria, Israel would be happy for French influence to prevent clashes. It had never proposed a non-aggression pact and it is unclear to him where the idea had originated, and in any event it must not be brought up on Israel's initiative. He is sceptical about the idea of a Jordan water conference,[3] and there is a danger that the Arabs will seize on it to gain time and meanwhile the work season will pass. He approves of inviting Pineau to Israel.[4]

Notes

1. Tsur cabled that France-Israel relations must not be based on arms deals alone and they should strive to expand the framework of cooperation between the two countries. He made a number of suggestions: exploiting the Pineau visit to India to mediate Israel-India relations; mediation between Syria and Israel and perhaps exploring the idea of a non-aggression pact which according to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been proposed by Israel; inviting Pineau to Israel (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 383, 23 February 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
2. Israel's request for the sale of a further 60 Mystère fighters in addition to the dozen whose sale had been approved – See No. 101.
3. In a conversation with Tsur on 10 February Pineau had put forward the idea of convening an Arab-Israel conference to discuss the Johnston plan – See No. 85.
4. Pineau did not visit Israel. Sharett had visited France in October and December 1955.

111. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 26 February 1956

Coded Tel. 458; Outg: 130.16/2952/1

Summary

Tekoah reports on a conversation between Sharett and Burns on 23 February.[1] Burns delivered a memorandum[2] reviewing his talks and correspondence and noting that Israel accepted the secretary-general's proposals unconditionally. Regarding the secretary-general's letter of 21 February,[3] Burns stressed that he had asked Egypt for a promise to grant the U.N. observers freedom of movement and he was awaiting an answer. With regard to the matter of border demarcation he confirmed that he intends employing workers from Gaza, and Israel would supply the materials.

The minister responded briefly on the issue of the border demarcation (he suggested also employing Israelis), and proceeded to the main topic. Israel distinguished between agreement and implementation. It had indeed accepted the secretary-general's proposals[4] and had even made a number of concessions, but it insisted on its demand for the removal of the Egyptian forces to beyond El Qouseima-Abou Aoueigila in accordance with Article VIII (3).[5] Israel's demands had been presented prior to the secretary-general's proposals, and it could not abandon them in exchange for the secretary-general's proposals. Furthermore, the conditions had changed. It was quiet in Nitzana, but there were troop concentrations on the border and especially in the Gaza Strip, and the I.D.F. could not withdraw its forces whilst the other forces remained.

Burns was astounded, and maintained that this meant a complete change in Israel's position. He asserted that the Egyptians for their part were complaining about troop concentrations. The minister replied that these claims could be verified. He summed up, saying: There are two problems, troop concentrations and Nitzana, and it is possible to agree to implement each one of them separately, or to come to an agreement and to implement simultaneously.

Burns said that he had to report to the secretary-general, and concluded that Israel was now demanding the implementation of Articles VII and VIII. The minister confirmed this. At the same time he took the opportunity to say that Israel was not going back on its agreement to the secretary-general's proposals, but could not implement them as long as its demands according to Article VIII (3), which had preceded the secretary-general's proposals, had not been implemented.

Notes

1. Further to their conversation on 21 February, see No. 104.
2. In File 130.02/2440/11.
3. In File 130.02/2440/6.
4. See No. 11 and notes 1 and 2 there.
5. Of the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement in which it says: "On the Egyptian side of the frontier, facing the El Auja area, no Egyptian defensive positions shall be closer to El Auja than El Qouseima and Abou Aoueigila.
6. On this article (and article VII mentioned below), see No. 11, n. 6.
7. The memorandum of the reply, dated 2 March, in File 130.02/2439/6.

112. President Eisenhower (Washington) to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion. 27 February 1956

Notes

1. No. 91.
2. Anderson returned to the Middle East at the beginning of March.

113. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 27 February 1956

Coded Tel. 717; Outg: 130.09/2321/2

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with the foreign secretary, Lloyd.[1] Lloyd hinted that the ambassador in Tel Aviv had not interpreted correctly the telegram that had been sent to him implying that Lloyd would refuse to visit Jerusalem. Such a thought had not entered his mind, until they had drawn his attention to the fact that this represented a political problem. He would come up to Jerusalem for a talk with the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, but if asked by the reporters, he would have to explain his government's position and would state that the visit did not signal any change. In the course of the conversation Lloyd summoned his private secretary who said that it would be best for the minister to act as had Dulles and Hammarskjöld[2] before him, who had not refused to visit but had refrained from participating in official events that might be interpreted as political acts. Lloyd said that he would raise the question with the prime minister and the cabinet.

At the end of the conversation Elath brought up the question of arms and expressed disappointment over Lloyd's most recent statements on this issue, and also with his own talks with Kirkpatrick[3] and Shuckburgh,[4] which had been unproductive. Lloyd said that he would deal with the matter within a day or two, before his departure, and in his absence they should contact Kirkpatrick and Nutting, and an answer would be given first of all with regard to the heavy weapons whose sale had been delayed after the Lake Tiberias operation.

Notes

1. On 20 February the British ambassador informed the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that British Foreign Secretary Lloyd wished to visit Israel on his way back from Karachi, and was given an affirmative response (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in London, Tel. 506, 20 February 1956, 130.09/2321/1). At a meeting with Sharett on 24 February the ambassador said that he had received from the Foreign Office an announcement of "a visit to Tel Aviv," and he concluded that Lloyd did not intend to come to Jerusalem. Sharett said that an official visit to Israel was inconceivable without a visit to Jerusalem (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Elath, Tel. 518, 24 February 1956, ibid.).
2. Dulles visited Israel on 13 to 14 May 1953 and held meetings both in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv; on Hammarskjöld's meeting with Ben-Gurion and Sharett in Jerusalem, see No. 56.
3. On 3 February Kirkpatrick told Elath that when Eden and Lloyd returned from the United States a discussion would be held regarding arms for Israel, and that he hoped that "in two weeks' time" Israel would know its results (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 659, 3 February 1956, 130.09.2321/2).
4. In a conversation with Shuckburgh the latter reported on the decisions reached at the Eisenhower-Eden summit. According to him Britain and the United States were in full agreement with regard to the Palestine question. It was decided that the Tripartite Declaration would serve as an instrument to prevent aggression, which would provide security to both Israel and to the Arabs, and in order to consolidate it the Three Powers would hold consultations in Washington. It was agreed that Israel and the Arabs must urgently be brought to an agreement, but the British delegation had avoided presenting a plan of its own for this purpose. Britain would continue discussions with the United States with regard to the general development of the region, would support the Johnston plan and would help get the Arab states to accept it. When asked at the end of the conversation about the requests for the supply of arms to Israel he replied that the matter would be discussed, and a reply would be given by the 28th of the month (See Elath to the British Commonwealth Division, 13 February 1956, 130.02/2455/9).
5. See No. 33, and n. 8 there.
6. Eventually Lloyd agreed to come to Jerusalem – See Elath to Ben-Gurion, Tel. 738, 5 March 1956, 130.09/2321/2).

114. S. Bendor (Paris) to the Israel Ambassador in France. 27 February 1956

Copy: 93.02/192/5

Summary

Bendor reports to the ambassador on a meeting held during his stay in Israel which dealt with Israel's relations with the Soviet Union. He dwells mainly on the remarks of the minister of foreign affairs who said:

A. Regarding a defence treaty with the United States. Israel must under no circumstances sell to the Soviet Union its renunciation of a defence treaty with the United States. The idea of a treaty had been raised in its time and there are those who think that this is a solution to guarantee Israel's existence, but Israel must not put this idea at the top of its list of demands. Its demand was for arms.

B. The minister rejected the argument that there was an equal degree of danger to Israel from the Czech arms deal and the Baghdad Pact. In the context of the Pact only small amounts of arms had been supplied. The main threat was not from Baghdad but from Cairo.

C. The main thrust of the minister's remarks concerned the proposal to request arms from the Soviet Union. The minister raised several objections to this: 1. the financial consideration (only the United States could supply arms free of charge). 2. The possibility that the Russians would offer arms but ask for a quid pro quo. 3. One could not assume that the United States would behave towards Israel, in the event that it asked for arms from the Russians, as it had behaved towards Egypt, that is, by offering aid in order to prevent it turning to the Soviet Union. 4. Approaching the Soviet Union at this stage would have a negative effect on the United States, particularly on the Jews. 5. If the United States sold arms to Israel, Israel could when the time came also turn to Czechoslovakia.

The minister favoured sending a parliamentary delegation to the Soviet Union and creating an atmosphere of dialogue with that country.

Notes

1. Minutes of the second meeting (on 20 February), in File 130.02/2457/15.
2. See No. 25.

115. A. Eban (Washington) to J. Herzog. 28 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA932; Outg: 93.01/2212/12

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Allen, dealing with Secretary Dulles' remarks.[1] Eban again reiterated Israel's concern about the remarks and presented a number of questions. 1. Should the secretary's words be taken to mean that Israel's request been for arms had been rejected? Allen replied that he had talked with the secretary regarding this matter and he had said that one ought not to see Israel's request as terminated. 2. Eban asked if the secretary's remarks meant that a defence treaty with the United States had never been seriously considered and whether an essential condition for such a treaty was change in the borders. He added that in the secretary's remarks on 26 August[2] and in Geneva[3] he had not rejected the possibility of a defence treaty based on the existing borders. Allen explained that in any case of difference between the 26 August speech and the secretary's remarks in the Senate, the 26 August statements were valid. With regard to the defence treaty, he pointed out that the secretary had not been accurate. His recent statements meant that under the existing circumstances such a thing was not feasible. Eban put further questions and Allen found it hard to answer, but only stammered that the secretary had been under great pressure when asked to answer a host of questions without being adequately prepared.

Eban returned to the borders issue. He expressed criticism about the secretary's reference to the armistice agreement concerning the temporary nature of Israel's borders, whilst ignoring the clause stating that the border could only be changed by a mutual agreement. Eban noted that the overall balance of the clauses in the armistice agreement[5] favoured finality. Allen replied that he would take note of this.

After the meeting the State Department phoned to say that Allen had talked with the secretary who promised to insert some of Eban's corrections into the official text of his remarks.

Notes

1. See No. 105 (Editorial Note).
2. In his speech to the American Council on Foreign Relations on 26 August 1955 – See No. 108, n. 3.
3. In his meeting with Sharett on 30 October 1955 Dulles said that there would be "a sympathetic study" of any arms list submitted by Israel (See Eban (from Geneva) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 32, 31 October 1955, 130.09/2310/16).
4. The Anderson mission.

5. In this paragraph in the armistice agreement with Egypt (and its parallels in the armistice agreements with Lebanon, Jordan and Syria) it is stated that the armistice agreement would remain in force until "a peaceful settlement between the Parties is achieved... [the Parties] may, by mutual consent, revise this Agreement or any of its provisions or may suspend its application, other than Articles I and II, at any time." See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, pp. 696-7.
6. Henry Labouisse, the director of UNWRA.
7. In Security Council Resolution S/2322 of 1 September 1951 concerning passage in the Suez Canal.

116. M. Kidron (New York) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 28 February 1956

Notes

1. This letter has not been traced.
2. In File 130.02/2440/1.
3. See Nos. 104 and 111; on the beginning of the affair see Nos. 11 and 56.
4. See No. 121.
5. In a further telegram Kidron gave more impressions about the conversation with the secretary-general. He had returned from his visit to Israel full of impressions and overflowing with admiration for its national enterprise. He describes Nasser as a shrewd and cunning man, ambitious and immature in his political outlook. At the same time he did not harbour, "at least until the spring," aggressive intentions against Israel. Hammarskjöld was critical of the Western Powers' policy towards the Arab-Israel conflict. He criticised the tendency to lump the border issues, the security treaty and water all together, and in his opinion each issue should be resolved separately. Here he expressed opposition to the tendency to force Israel to make territorial concessions in the Negev (See Kidron to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 51, 29 February 1956, 130.02/2439/6). For Sharett's reply, see No. 157.

117. J. Herzog (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 29 February 1956

Coded Tel. W706; Outg: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Herzog reports on a meeting of Lawson with Ben-Gurion and Sharett, with reference to the secretary of state's remarks in the Senate Committee.[1]

Ben-Gurion spoke very emotionally and said that the secretary's remarks were a bitter disappointment for Israel. He analysed these remarks and

said that Israel required a direct and urgent reply, yes or no, to its request for arms. The matter was urgent, arms were pouring into Egypt week after week. Israel needed time in order to train its pilots. If it received arms after it was attacked it would be too late. If the United States had determined to let Israel down it should say so explicitly.

The ambassador responded that he understood the gravity of the situation in Israel and it certainly had to receive a reply. He could confidently say that a negative decision had not been made in Washington. He would try to obtain a clear answer as soon as possible.

The minister of foreign affairs enumerated the promises that had been given and the rejections. A dishonourable situation had developed both for the United States and for Israel, since the United States was proving itself incapable of reaching a decision, and Israel had gone from making a request to begging. There was a danger that Israel was feeding its citizens on vain hopes. The secretary's statement "that the United States does not exclude the possibility of supplying arms to Israel at a time when this will preserve peace" meant endless postponements. The secretary's argument that "permanent security will not rest primarily upon arms but upon friendly relations among neighbours" did not serve the United States and its allies in planning their own security. An axiom of American foreign policy is that first security has to be based on armed force and after that come guarantees. In Israel's case they were adopting the opposite approach.

Ben-Gurion summed up by saying that within a short time he would have to inform the Knesset about the true situation and to call upon the nation to make great sacrifices.

Notes

1. On 24 February 1956. See No. 105.
2. See No. 149.
3. See No. 15, n. 9.
4. See No. 99.
5. See Eban (from Geneva) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 32, 31 October 1955, in File 130.09/2310/16.
6. Transcript of the conversation, dated 6 December 1955, in File 130.02/2455/8.
7. Should be "9 November" – See No. 15, n.11.
8. See No. 95, n. 2.

118. A. Eban (Washington) to J. Herzog. 29 February 1956

Coded Tel. WIA937; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban reports that Allen had informed him that the State Department was explaining to the Arab representatives the great importance of the Johnston plan and the absolute opposition of the United States to any use of force, whatever action Israel undertook. The Department was opposed to the resumption of the work by Israel in the demilitarized zone without Burns' approval but if it resumed work and carried out only the Johnston plan without adversely affecting the water reaching the Arabs, the United States would not go out of its way to oppose it.

Note

1. In this telegram Herzog said that he had heard from Lawson that the State Department was holding energetic talks with Arab representatives in Washington, Cairo and Damascus on the water issue (The telegram, dated 28 February, in File 130.09/2311/5).

119. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 1 March 1956

Coded Tel. 421; Inc.: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau.[1]

He had welcomed the invitation to visit Israel. He promised to talk with Nehru regarding Israel-India relations. His efforts to mediate in Syria over the issue of the work in the Jordan river bed had been unsuccessful. The Syrians refused to discuss this subject separately from the whole range of political issues.

The conversation dwelt mainly on the supply of arms. Tsur would report separately on the Mystère issue.[2] Pineau advised Israel not to make such a large order now (60 planes), but to be content with a further dozen, and promised his support. Tsur reminded him about the order for the tanks. Pineau complained about the attacks on him in the press and in parliament which claimed that France was not supplying arms to Israel. His situation was difficult, because on the one hand he was unable to report the truth, for

fear of revealing the size of the supply, and on the other hand he did not wish to conceal the shipments. Therefore he asked Israel to use its contacts in the French press and refrain as much as possible from discussing the question of the arms purchase.

Notes

1. See No. 110.
2. Tsur reported that Pineau had informed him that despite his numerous entreaties the British and American reply concerning the Mystères had not yet been received and therefore he had informed Washington and London that France would deliver the planes to Israel on 15 March no matter what the reply of the other powers (Tsur's telegram to Sharett and Peres, No. 420, 1 March 1956, 130.10/2522/21).
3. See No. 134.
4. At the beginning of November 1955 an agreement was signed between the ministries of defence of France and Israel according to which France had committed itself to supply Israel with items of weaponry, including Mystère and Ouragan fighters, 60 AMX-type tanks and 60 Sherman tanks (See Tsur and Peres to Ben-Gurion, 4 November 1955, 130.09/2457/4).

120. Israel Embassy in Washington to the United States Division. 2 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA960; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

The embassy reports on a conversation between Eban and Dulles, which took place on the eve of the secretary of state's departure for the SEATO conference in Karachi.

The secretary said that he had asked to meet despite the fact that he had nothing new to state, and this was in light of the tense situation in the region. He complained that in spite of his efforts to deal with the situation Israel suspected him of lack of sincerity. There had not been any retreat or lessening of the United States' efforts to ensure Israel's security, but when Israel was concerned solely for itself it disregarded the more comprehensive aspects of the problem and ignored the efforts of the United States to find ways to secure the peace and security of Israel. In addition to all this Israel was waging a political struggle against the Administration and himself personally.

Eban responded forcefully, saying that Israel was not accusing the secretary of lack of sincerity, but was surprised that there had been a setback

with regard to the issue of the arms supply, and there was a perception that the discussion about the possibility of a defence treaty was not serious.[2] Eban expanded on the situation in the region and said that precisely because Israel saw the situation as a whole it was unable to desist from its demand. Current attempts to urge Israel to appeal for help to the U.N. signified that it could not rely on anyone. After the explicit announcements to the minister of foreign affairs and the embassy[4] about sympathetic review of its requests, Dulles' latest remarks had come as a surprise and change of position.

Dulles explained that as far as he knew he had not deviated from the promises made in the past. As long as there was a chance of an overall settlement, he could not authorise the sale of arms. Arms could not guarantee Israel's security for long in a hostile world surrounding it on all sides. What power did Israel have against 40 million Arabs, he asked. Here he again reiterated the argument that instead of encouraging and assisting him, a personal attack was being made on him and his government. From talks he had held with George and Richards,[5] he had been convinced that there was no chance today of passing a resolution on a defence treaty with Israel in Congress. First of all the right climate must be created, and the American people must recognise that all possibilities of action in the framework of the U.N. had been exhausted. Only if the current peace efforts failed would he be more disposed to respond positively. He did not know how long this process would take. In any event, the possibility of the supply of arms in the future was not excluded.

The ambassador officially protested the accusation about a political battle being waged against the secretary and the Administration, and pointed out that the sympathy and support for Israel came from all corners of the United States and from people who had no political interest. He maintained that the numerical comparison of the populations as an indicator for the defensive capability was distorted. In conclusion he said that he would convey the secretary's remarks to his government.

The secretary concluded with the request to inform the Israeli government that he was devoting unceasing efforts to the problem of Israel. After the conversation the secretary made his answer public to a visiting group of Republicans under the leadership of Scott and Keating.[6]

Notes

1. To the conference of foreign ministers of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in Karachi.
2. See the last section of No. 105.
3. The dismissal of Lieutenant-General Glubb – See No. 124, n. 1.
4. See Nos. 84 and 115.

5. Walter P. George, Democratic senator from Georgia, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; James P. Richards, member of the House of Representatives (Democrat) from South Carolina, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.
6. See No. 123.
7. In a telegram which Eban sent as a supplement to the above telegram (Eban to Sharett, Tel. 963, 3 March 1956, 93.01/2213/7) he states that in light of the special Anderson mission Dulles is not prepared "for the sake of gaining a small amount of time with regard to the arms to endanger any small spark of a greater chance."

121. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 2 March 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 467; Outg: 130.02/2439/6

Summary

Tekoah reports the conversation of the minister of foreign affairs with Burns. The conversation began with a discussion of the situation on the Egyptian border. Burns repeated the claim that he had made in writing that the U.N. observers had recently noticed three incidents of opening fire by Israel and this contradicted Israel's claim that only the Egyptians were shooting.[1] Sharett replied that the remarks in Burns' letter had distorted the picture, and complained that after months of unceasing shooting in the Gaza Strip by the Egyptians, Burns mentioned a few incidents whilst disregarding the overall situation. Recently there had been an increased number of incidents, and consequently the I.D.F. had been instructed to return fire in every case. He asked to convey this to Egypt. Burns was confused, he said that he had written what the observers had told him, and recently he had contacted the Egyptians a number of times following the incidents, but Nasser's promise to him that they would not open fire had apparently not been kept. He repeated his suggestion to move the forces 500 metres away from the border line. Sharett explained why Israel did not agree with this proposal, since it did not wish to deprive its citizens working close to the border of a sense of security.

They then proceeded to discuss the question of Nitzana. Burns asked for Israel's reaction to his memorandum of 23 February[3] and this was promised for the following week.[4] Sharett repeated Israel's position orally. Israel was not going back on its agreement to the U.N. proposals. The conversation between Hammarskjöld and the prime minister had been informative and not operative. Meanwhile, the Egyptian troop concentrations had increased, and the new Egyptian weaponry was flowing to the border. Burns asked if

Israel would be prepared to discuss the implementation of Article VII of the Armistice Agreement,[8] and Sharett replied in the affirmative. Here Burns raised the question of the freedom of movement of the observers. Sharett replied that this would require a change in the agreement which could only come about by agreement. Burns summed up that Israel's readiness to discuss Article VII would be mentioned in an answer to be sent to him for his guidance in Cairo, and it was possible that the Egyptians would agree to Israel's proposals but he was not hopeful about this.[9]

Notes

1. The letter from Burns to Tekoah of 28 February 1956 in file 130.02/2439/6.
2. See No. 56, n. 3.
3. In File 130.02/2440/11. In this memorandum it said among other things that from the correspondence with Eytan and Tekoah, Burns concluded that Israel accepted unconditionally Hammarskjöld's proposals concerning the demilitarized zone in Nitzana (See No. 11, n. 2), however it felt that discussions should be held with regard to the way in which these proposals would be implemented.
4. From 2 March 1956, in File 130.02/2439/6. In the reply an explanation of Israel's position in the Nitzana affair is given similar to that stated below.
5. Article VIII of the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement which states: "on the Egyptian side of the frontier, facing the El Auja area, no Egyptian defensive positions shall be closer to El Auja than El Qouseima and Abou Aoueigila" (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, p. 693).
6. See No. 11, n. 2.
7. See No. 56.
8. Article VII of the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement states that in the territory defined as "the western front under Egyptian control" only defensive Egyptian forces may be maintained, whilst in the territory defined as "the western front under Israeli control" only Israeli defensive forces may be maintained.
9. See No. 126.

122. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 3 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA962; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban cables Sharett that in a talk between Russell and Shiloah after the meeting with the secretary of state,[2] Russell explained that the secretary had appointed a committee headed by him whose function was to present within a month a plan for guaranteeing the security of Israel that would include the sale of defensive arms to Israel and ways to determine the United States' obligation to intervene in the event of aggression. On this

issue the committee had to explain what would be done in the U.N. and what would be done outside it. Russell asked for a meeting the following week.[3] The assumption was that it would focus on steps to be taken if the Anderson mission failed.

Notes

1. Not found.
2. See No. 120.
3. See No. 128.

123. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 3 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA964; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban had gleaned several details about the conversation between the secretary of state and Scott[1] and his colleagues who had come in the name of 50 Republican representatives from 25 states. They had reminded Dulles of the various promises he had made, all of which had not been kept, and had caused public and party damage. They could not allow the Republican Party to spoil assets and violate traditions that it had inherited from the party platforms over decades. The secretary's position, in their view, jeopardised the party's victory and his opposition to the supply of arms was contrary to the mood in the House of Representatives. Scott said that he intended to publish a letter stating his position and that of his colleagues.

Dulles was stunned by these remarks. He said that the efforts that had been mentioned on 6 February[5] were continuing, and within two to three weeks the situation would become clear. He would immediately instruct Hoover to examine the clauses of the Israeli arms request, since if it turned out that the efforts had failed and there was no chance of a settlement, then approval could begin. He made them swear not to inform the Israeli ambassador of these remarks, since he wished to focus the attention of the Israeli government on peace and not on arms in the forthcoming fateful weeks. He also promised to release the French planes and to convene the Tripartite Commission[7] once more.

Scott believed that his group's pressure was effective and that it should be maintained.[9]

Notes

1. Hugh Scott, Republican member of the House of Representatives, led his party's activity for the supply of arms to Israel – See No. 77, n. 3.
2. See No. 83, n. 2.
3. In his appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 24 February 1956, see No. 105.
4. See No. 77, n. 3.
5. Dulles' letter to the members of the House of Representatives who supported the supplying of arms to Israel, see ibid.
6. See No. 120.
7. A committee comprising representatives from the United States, Britain and France, which was set up following the Eisenhower-Eden meeting to discuss Middle East issues – See No. 71.
8. The letter was published by Scott on 2 March, in File 130.02/2455/9.
9. This telegram, which Sharett described as "dramatic" reached him as the government was in session. Sharett read it to the ministers, after swearing them to absolute secrecy, and used it in a debate which took place at that time regarding the possibility of appealing to the Soviet Union to receive arms (See No. 25). According to Sharett this telegram swung the balance and it was decided to delay the appeal to the Soviet Union by three weeks (See Sharett to Eban, IWA744, 6 March 1956, 93.01/2213/9).

124. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 4 March 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 472; Outg.: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Sharett analyses the significance of the sacking of Glubb from the command of the Arab Legion.[1] The sacking was a serious setback for Britain and a further Western failure in the Middle East. On the other hand, Nasser would emerge as the victor and the Soviets would also welcome the event, which would facilitate their penetration of the region. The effectiveness of the Jordanian army would be reduced and the prestige of the Palestinians in Jordan would rise since they saw in the removal of Glubb and his people the defeat of their opponents. In its propaganda Israel must condemn the superficiality and shortsightedness of British policy and urge Britain to make a thorough reassessment in the Middle East in order to achieve a new awareness of Israel's standing in the region as the sole state with whom stable cooperation was possible; in addition, to make of the whole issue a new point of departure for the campaign for arms for Israel.

Notes

1. On 2 March 1956 King Hussein announced the dismissal of the commander of the Arab Legion, Lieutenant-General Glubb, as well as the firing of two other British officers. Glubb's dismissal did not affect official relations with Britain and King Hussein announced that these relations would remain unchanged and the British-Jordanian agreement of 1948 would remain valid.
2. In December 1955 there were violent demonstrations in Jordan against joining the Baghdad Pact. The prime minister, Hazza al-Majali, who favoured joining the pact, was forced to resign (on 19 December) and on 21 December a transition government headed by Ibrahim Hashem was sworn in, which announced that Jordan would not join the pact. Most of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan opposed economic, political and military dependence on Britain and had a pro-Egyptian and pro-Syrian orientation.

125. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 5 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA966; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban was summoned to see Hoover. The latter began by expressing sorrow over the latest Lake Tiberias incident,[1] but asked emphatically for Israeli restraint and non-reaction. Any reaction under the existing circumstances would be a great world tragedy. He said that on the basis of Anderson's first talk with Nasser, Anderson felt that progress had been made since Nasser had made a proposal that Anderson could accept. He did not give details.[2]

Eban thanked him for expressing condolences, but added that this was not sufficient. He stressed that it was a question of a lake and a shore that belonged entirely to Israel and to which the Syrians had no right. Hoover said that when the U.N. report came,[4] the United States would remain faithful to the tradition of support for the report's conclusions.

Notes

1. On 4 March an Israeli police boat which was on a routine patrol along the north-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias ran aground on a sandbank. The Syrians opened fire on the boat and on boats which came to release it. Four Israeli policemen were wounded by the fire. The Syrians crossed the Israeli border and dragged one of the boats with the wounded in it towards their positions. All the wounded died and their bodies were transferred to Israel a few days later.
2. See No. 128.

3. The Security Council resolution on the Lake Tiberias incident, see No. 29 (Editorial Note).
4. The report, dated 12 March 1956 (U.N. Document S/3558) in File 130.02/2440/5.

126. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to Major-General E.L.M. Burns. 5 March 1956

Note

1. See No. 121.

127. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. IW738; Outg.:130.02/2455/9

Summary

Sharett cables that the director-general of the Ministry of Defence, Peres, was coming to the United States and instructs the embassy to use this opportunity to consult on the whole issue of the arms purchase. He sums up the situation as follows: Israel would receive 12 Mystères from France and another 12 shortly. In order to reach the necessary minimum they required 24 F-86 jets from the United States, and he had already spoken about this with Lawson. Peres intended to explore the possibility of obtaining them in Italy,[1] but Sharett believed that they should obtain them from the United States, free of charge or cheaply. Apart from this, Israel would demand from the United States anti-tank weapons and patrol planes, which were defensive arms to all intents and purposes.

Note

1. Regarding the disappointment Israel experienced over procurement in Italy, see No. 165, n. 9.

128. R. Shiloah (Washington) to J. Herzog. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA971; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Shiloah reports on a meeting with Russell. He asked him the meaning of Hoover's remarks about the progress noted by Anderson in his talk with Nasser.[1] Nasser had replied that if the United States declared a policy of non-expansion of the Baghdad Pact, he would be ready to act boldly with respect to a meeting with Israel and the Johnston plan. Russell instructed Anderson that he could not give a commitment in the absence of the secretary of state, but if Nasser cooperated on the Johnston issue and on a meeting with Israel he would recommend to his government to adopt in practice a policy of non-expansion of the Baghdad Pact. Eban and Shiloah responded by saying that Nasser was using delaying and foot-dragging tactics and Israel could not go along with them.

They proceeded to discuss the Jordan river project. Eban and Shiloah understood that the United States was applying pressure and threatening that if the Arab states persisted in their refusal, the United States would permit Israel to resume its independent diversion project and would oppose any Syrian attempt to hinder it by force. The State Department had been promised that the matter would be discussed at a gathering of Arab heads of state due to take place on March 10,[3] and Nasser would use his influence to prevent a political resolution against the project.

The main part of the conversation was devoted to the question of Israel's security. Eban and Shiloah asked about the significance of the committee that had been set up in the State Department to discuss the problem.[5] Russell replied that this was an internal committee, in which the army was also represented, and its function was to prepare practical proposals for the secretary of state for preserving Israel's security whilst taking the West's needs into consideration. Just now he was prepared to receive ideas and practical suggestions from Israel. Eban and Shiloah did not commit themselves, but suggest preparing a few memoranda for the committee. The conversation ended with a description given by the Israelis of Nasser's subversive acts and the strengthening of his ties with the Soviets. Russell replied that in the State Department as well there was a growing lack of trust in Nasser but they had still not given up.[6]

Notes

1. See No. 125.
2. Selwyn Lloyd visited Cairo at the beginning of March, on his way to the conference of South East Asian foreign ministers in Karachi.
3. Nasser, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli, and King Saud of Saudi Arabia attended the conference, which took place between 6-11 March.
4. See No. 120.
5. See No. 122.
6. See No. 129. Sharett replied that it seemed to him that Nasser's conditions were reasonable, since his demand for something in return for his acceptance is justified. Had the United States made its assistance for the Aswan Dam conditional on his help for the Johnston plan, this would have been the return. Since Aswan was given for nothing, he was seeking an additional profit, both with regard to Johnston and also with regard to the meeting with the Israeli representatives. Consequently, the lack of response by the Americans to his desire weakens them, especially since the Baghdad Pact is frozen. All of this of course on condition that Nasser is sincere in what he says. As for the requested memoranda, he is ready to prepare a rough draft in Israel which will be given to the embassy for final wording, and afterwards for approval in Israel (See Sharett to Eban and Shiloah, Tel. IWA760, 8 March 1956, 93.01/2213/7).

129. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. IWA973; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Murphy.
Murphy's attitude to the Anderson mission was sceptical, his scepticism concerned Nasser and not Anderson. The secretary of state stubbornly stuck to the position that they must give the mission a chance.

Eban asked what would happen when the mission failed. He answered that in such a case American approval of the arms request would follow, at least regarding the air section and encouraging other states to act on other sections. He hinted that there was the possibility of a softening of the British position in view of the crisis in Jordan.[2]

He said that the likelihood of American intervention in the event of an attack on Israel was very real, and more so under the terms of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration rather than by action in the U.N. Eban responded that this likelihood was of little value as long as it was not spelled out clearly to Israel, Egypt and the American people. Murphy agreed that this intention had to be elaborated in advance and then discussed with Israel.

He added that the United States was trying to suggest to several states that its refusal to give arms to Israel was based on special circumstances that were not applicable to them.

Notes

1. The Anderson mission.
2. Following Glubb's dismissal – See No. 124.

130. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA974; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Eban accepts Sharett's recommendation[1] to wait until the Anderson mission is over, but points out that the worst thing that can happen is that the mission does not end with a clear-cut decision either way, resulting in further postponement. On the other hand, if the mission failed as a result of Nasser's refusal to meet, there was a chance that Israel would receive arms and perhaps also other means to consolidate its security.

Note

1. In this telegram Sharett advised waiting until the end of the Anderson mission (Tel. 736, 6 March 1956 in File 93.01/2213/7).

131. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 6 March 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 483; Outg: 130.16/2954/7

Summary

Tekoah reports on a conversation of Director-General Walter Eytan with Burns before the latter's departure for Cairo. Burns wished to clarify some questions regarding Israel's position on the armistice agreement. They discussed the Nitzana issue for the first time. The director-general confirmed that Israel was demanding the removal of the Egyptian forces concentrated in the Gaza Strip and Abou Aoueigila in contravention of Articles VII and

VIII[2] of the armistice agreement. Israel, for its part, would be prepared to limit its forces in accordance with Article VII. Burns asked further if Israel would be prepared to allow the observers to maintain a permanent inspection of the situation in the defence areas to which Article VII was applicable. In his opinion the right to inspect and freedom of movement for the observers, not simply for purposes of inquiry, were essential for the fulfilment of Article VII. The director-general replied that Israel did not demand a permanent inspection of the deployment of forces on the Egyptian side of the border, and therefore Egypt was not at all justified in demanding such inspection on the Israeli side. In his view, this demand represented a change in the armistice agreement and he called for the agreement of the sides.

They then proceeded to discuss the situation along the Gaza Strip border. Burns asked if Israel would agree to move its forces 500 metres back from the border during the daytime, on condition that the Egyptians would do likewise. The director-general explained Israel's opposition to this suggestion. Instead, Burns must demand that the Egyptians fulfill their obligations and not link the demand with the withdrawal of forces.

The Lake Tiberias incident.[4] Burns said that in his opinion the incident would not have occurred if Israel had been keeping to the 250 metre line. Tekoah commented that some said that it was precisely the suggestion to keep the police boats away from the shore that influenced the Syrians and instilled in them a sense of lawlessness and freedom to attack boats approaching the shore.

Notes

1. See No. 121 and n. 4 there.
2. See ibid., notes 5 and 7.
3. See No. 11, and notes 1 and 2 there.
4. See No. 125 and n. 1 there.

132. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. IW741; Outg: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Sharett reports on a conversation with Lawson. The latter began by expressing regret over the Lake Tiberias incident[1] and said that they were appealing vigorously to Syria, and hoped that Israel would exercise restraint.

Sharett said that the Syrian action was treacherous since Israel had sent the police after having informed the Syrians about it via the U.N. Nevertheless, Israel would take the American requests into consideration, especially after the secretary of state had announced that he saw a chance of a settlement in the region. At the same time, Israel stressed once more that the United States was morally on trial on the arms issue, and an answer was crucial in the next few days. The ambassador did not respond to this but his facial expression indicated that he agreed with Sharett's remarks.

After that the ambassador proceeded to discuss the subject of the resumption of work in the Jordan river bed and requested that Israel not resume work without the consent of the Security Council and the commander of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization. He added that the United States was putting pressure on the Arab states, also through Johnston, for them to accept his plan. Sharett replied that Israel had already been waiting for three years. The Security Council resolution had spoken of a short break until the matter was clarified, and the conclusions of the clarification had endorsed Israel's position.[2] Reliance on the U.N. meant Syrian agreement, and this would never be given. He asked if the United States would be prepared to influence Burns to authorise the resumption of work if the Syrians did not announce their agreement to the arrangement within a few weeks, and what the United States would do if Israel resumed the work after the waiting period did not produce any result. Lawson did not reply, but made a note of the remarks.

Notes

1. See No. 125, n. 1.
2. The issue of the work to divert the channel of the Jordan was the subject of a dispute between Israel and Syria towards the end of 1953. From the start of the dispute the then chief of staff of U.N.T.S.O., Bennike, asserted that the Israeli work in the Jordan river violated the water rights of the Arabs in the demilitarized zone and gave Israel strategic advantages, and because of this it amounted to a violation of the Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement and Israel must stop the work. Israel refused, and the Syrians lodged a complaint in the Security Council. During the debate Eban announced that Israel was prepared temporarily to suspend the work in the demilitarized zone in order to facilitate the debate in the Security Council. Following this, the Western Powers drew up a draft resolution approving the decision of the chief of staff to stop the work, but charging him with seeking ways for its resumption with the consent of Israel and Syria. This resolution won majority backing in the Council, but the Soviet Union thwarted it by using its right of veto (See Vol. 8, Companion Volume, Introduction, pp. xxxiv-xxxv, Vol. 9, No. 28).

133. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to E. Elath (London). 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. 537; Outg: 130/09/2321/1

Summary

British Ambassador Nicholls was received by the minister of foreign affairs at the ambassador's request. In their conversation two subjects were discussed: Selwyn Lloyd's visit to Israel[1] and the resumption of work on diversion of the Jordan river.

With regard to the visit, Nicholls announced that Lloyd wished to avoid an official visit to the prime minister in Jerusalem and therefore suggested that most of the talks be held in Tel Aviv. In Jerusalem there would only be a courtesy visit to the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, and if necessary they could continue there the talks begun in Tel Aviv. Sharett retorted sharply to the effect that Israel insisted on holding the talks in Jerusalem. Nicholls replied that he would convey Israel's position to London and he understood that a negative answer would mean the cancellation of the visit.

Regarding the work in the channel of the Jordan,[3] he said that Britain, in coordination with the United States, was applying pressure on the Arabs to accept the Johnston plan. Consequently, their position on the resumption of the work was that Bennike's order halting the work was still in force, and they requested that Israel not resume it or set any date for its resumption. Sharett rejected the British interpretation of the Security Council debates concerning the work in the channel and repeated Israel's position as formulated by the prime minister.[4] It was prepared to allow a limited period of time to elapse for an examination of the situation, but if the Arabs again evaded giving a clear answer there would be no alternative but to resume the work, since stopping it would mean the loss of a season's work and the danger of a major flare-up. He requested that the British warn the Syrians that they would support Israel if they persisted in their refusal.

Notes

1. See No. 113.
2. See ibid., notes 2 and 3.
3. See No. 132 and n. 2 there.
4. See No. 95, n. 2.

134. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division and S. Peres. 6 March 1956

Coded Tel. 448; Inc.: 130.10/2552/21

Summary

He reports on his talk with Bourgès-Maunoury, the minister of defence. The latter confirmed that he had received instructions to carry out the sale of the 12 Mystères[1] and would support Israel's request for the sale of additional planes and vehicles in accordance with the November agreement.[2] He added that he would continue to support Israel. Regarding the vehicles, he said that Pineau had opposed this and argued that the United States must also be made to shoulder the burden of concern for Israel. But he had disagreed with him and his position had been accepted. He supported the normal continuation of military supply to Israel. Tsur asked him to talk with the prime minister before his journey to London and to warn him against bowing to the British view of the dispatch of arms to Israel.

Notes

1. See No. 1 and n. 1 there.
2. See No. 119, n. 4.

135. I. Kosloff (Jerusalem) to A. Miron. 6 March 1956

Orig.: 130.15/2565/24

Summary

Kosloff issues a briefing to Doriel prior to his departure to Iran.[1] He asks Doriel to study the briefing and under no circumstances to take it to Iran, lest it fall into the hands of the petroleum companies or the Iranians. For the briefing see Main Volume, pp. 224-225.

Notes

1. At the beginning of 1956 Z. Doriel was appointed representative in Teheran. Due to the absence of diplomatic relations between Iran and Israel he appeared under the "cover" of an official of a trade company called "Iris," the acronym of Iran-Israel.
2. See also No. 27.

136. M. Sharett (Washington) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 7 March 1956

Coded Tel. IW750; Outg.: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Sharett refers to Eban's telegram[1] which contained an appeal that the effort to obtain a defence treaty with the United States not be neglected. He had approved it in principle, but with the proviso that the whole Israeli effort was currently to demand arms, whereas the slogan of a defence treaty was being played down for the moment. Consequently, he is doubtful whether it was worthwhile at this stage to activate the partner[3] and to bring up the question of the defence treaty in a conversation with Dulles himself and thus to afford him the possibility of hiding behind the Senate in order to justify shelving the matter. The campaign currently being waged was for arms and the subject of the defence treaty was to be brought up only in response to the arguments of others, in order to prove that this was no substitute for arms.

Notes

1. It was worded as follows: "In all our vital and justified propaganda for preferring arms to security guarantees it is important not to burn bridges by slighting the demand for guarantees that contain a chance for Power intervention to preserve the armistice lines. Let us assume that we receive the arms, and we shall be both happy and delighted about it, but we shall immediately seek additional means of bolstering our security, like a ship which makes for the horizon and when it reaches it a new horizon at once opens up. I am sure that here I am in line with your views (Eban to Sharett, 20 February 1956, 130.09/2311/7).
2. See No. 105.
3. Arthur Dean was a partner in a law firm headed by Dulles before his appointment as secretary of state. He helped the Israeli efforts to obtain a security treaty in 1955 (See H. Eshed, *One Man "Mossad"*, pp. 188-193, 195-196 [Hebrew]).

137. R. Shiloah (Washington) to M. Sharett. 7 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA985; Outg.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Shiloah reports that he learned from Murphy that Nasser had informed Anderson that at this stage he was not at liberty to adopt a more independent

position without, his two colleagues – the president of Syria and the king of Saudi Arabia – who were due to confer with him. Consequently, he did not consider that the time was ripe at this juncture to meet with Israeli representatives at any level whatsoever. This news depressed Anderson as well as the people from the Central Intelligence Agency.

Notes

1. The Syrian president, Shukri al-Quwatli, and King Saud of Saudi Arabia – See No. 127 and n. 3 there.
2. The Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) headed by Allen Dulles, brother of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

138. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 7 March 1956

Coded Tel. 749; Inc.: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Kirkpatrick. Elath first broached the subject of arms and said that Israel had still not received a clear answer to the question that was so crucial for it, even though such an answer had been promised.[1] Kirkpatrick said that there had been delays but that an answer would be forthcoming within 24 hours and he hoped that it would not be negative, at least with regard to the release of the planes. Elath responded that if that were the only positive answer Israel would consider itself offended. The release of the planes would create the illusion of the supply of arms, whereas in actual fact this did not represent an answer to the Arab arms buildup. The recent developments in Jordan and the Arab arms buildup obliged Israel to raise its request from 30 Centurion tanks to 50. Israel feared unrest in Jordan and that the Jordanian army would cease to be a stabilising force as it had been thus far.

Kirkpatrick replied that he would convey Israel's requests and its assessments about Jordan to the prime minister. He continued with the Jordanian topic and noted that there was a danger of total disintegration there. The army was indeed the main factor preserving the integrity of the kingdom which was an artificial creation.

In Elath's estimation the British Foreign Office was apparently envisaging a plan for the annexation of Jordan by Iraq, and Kirkpatrick's statement

bore witness to the intention to lay the groundwork for this future move. He would continue to clarify details and would also work on the arms issue.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 113, n. 4.
2. See No. 6.
3. The 1948 British-Jordanian treaty.
4. On a further conversation with Kirkpatrick see No. 162.

139. F. E. Shinnar (Cologne) to M. Sharett. 7 March 1956

Coded Tel. 535; Inc.: 130.09/2354/1

Summary

Shinnar reports on his conversation with Brentano regarding the dispatch of a German trade delegation to Israel. After he expounded the Israeli arguments according to the briefing he had received,[1] he asked for a clear and non-evasive answer. Brentano suggested delaying the dispatch of the mission until after the meeting of the German Middle Eastern ambassadors due to take place in Istanbul in mid-April. It was not the intention to make the dispatch conditional on the agreement of the ambassadors and he also promised to submit this officially in writing. Shinnar suggests that the arrangement should be accepted. Rejecting it and insisting on the immediate dispatch of the delegation was liable to create a dangerous situation that could affect the reparations. He requests instructions.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 102.
2. See No. 82 and also No. 102, n. 7.
3. See Shinnar to Sharett, 7 March 1956, 130.02/2413/3.
4. Only a part of Sharett's directives was found. Shinnar was instructed not to mention in his letter the ambassadors' conference, which did not concern Israel, and to ask that the date of the dispatching of the delegation be determined in advance (See Sharett to the mission in Cologne, Tel. 737, 12 March 1956, 130.09/2354/2).

140. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Legation in Budapest. 7 March 1956

Coded Tel. 462; Outg: 130.09/2295/11

Summary

The division reports on a conversation with the Hungarian chargé d'affaires in Israel. They discussed immigration and the latter said that they were allowing anyone who wished to emigrate. But only a few (in the past year only two hundred) were interested. The division representative denied this and suggested that in 1956 they permit 2,000. The increased immigration would create a positive atmosphere in all countries in the world with a concentration of Jews and would bring benefits to Hungary. He promised to report back. They also discussed trade and cultural relations. A further meeting was fixed for the following week.[1]

Note

1. At the meeting, which was held on 13 March, a general conversation took place about Israel's standing in the world and its relations with the two blocs. Israel-Hungarian relations were not discussed (See East European Division to the Israel legation in Budapest, 14 March 1956, 130.09/2295/11).

141. R. Shiloah (Washington) to M. Sharett. 8 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA990; Outg: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Shiloah reports on a conversation he and the ambassador had with Russell. They found him depressed and he acknowledged the failure of the Anderson mission. The Czech deal and Nasser's achievements in the Arab world had gone to his head. The United States had to reappraise its policy in the Middle East. The tendency was to adopt a policy bolstering pro-Western elements in the region, and assuring the oil supply and the security and existence of Israel. With regard to Israel they had to adopt a policy combining the supply of arms to enable it to withstand attack until the arrival of outside assistance, and making effective arrangements for outside assistance. The new tendency is to begin by strengthening ties with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Russell asked if Israel would cooperate with Anderson or with another

envoy if it was decided to place the emphasis on negotiation with Iraq, or more specifically whether Israel would agree to enter into negotiations for compensation for refugees if Iraq undertook to absorb a certain number of such refugees. Eban and Shiloah replied that Israel did not reject and would always be willing to discuss any constructive proposal, but would not agree to an attempt to evade the resolution of the central problem which was the arming of Israel. The list it had submitted[1] proved that the arms were for defence purposes only. At the end of the conversation Russell asked them to consider it as his personal reflections and not as representing the conclusions of the State Department.

Note

1. In November 1955 – See No. 5, n. 3.

142. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 8 March 1956

Coded Tel. 465; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur refers to the situation of the Jews in Algeria following the emissaries' report.[1]

The situation was indeed very dangerous, but at the moment there was no pressure for emigration. The emissaries' warning referred to the case of an extreme outbreak that was liable to result in a flow of immigrants. In view of this situation there was no need for immediate action, but they had to prepare for it. In view of the difficulty of absorption of Moroccan Jews and the mounting pressure there, immigration from Algeria should not be encouraged prematurely. Instructions to this effect had been given to the representatives of the Jewish Agency and the emissaries.

Note

1. In this memorandum, dated 22 February, it said that the days of the French presence in Algeria were numbered, and afterwards the situation of the Jews would be grave. The writers of the memorandum advise preparations for emergency emigration (The memorandum in File 130.10/2625/12).

143. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett.[1] 10 March 1956

Coded Tel.; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

He reports on a conversation with Mollet before his journey to London. They began by discussing the arms purchase. Mollet said that the French government had approved the delivery of the 12 Mystères.[2] It would not wait for the consent of the English and the Americans. Tsur asked about an additional sale of Mystères. Mollet replied that his government favoured the sale of arms to Israel. Tsur asked if he could convey this to Ben-Gurion, he replied in the affirmative, but asked that two conditions be stressed: secrecy and delivery in stages.

Afterwards they proceeded to discuss the situation in the Middle East and the policy of the powers there. Mollet was critical of British and French policy in the region, but there were signs that the British and to a certain extent the Americans were beginning to be disillusioned. He was convinced of the need for joint action by the Western Powers to weaken Nasser. Tsur noted that the balance of power had to be restored, to maintain the status quo and to recognise the existing borders between Israel and the Arab states. Mollet expressed his agreement and stressed particularly that the restoration of the arms balance was a fixture of French policy. He warned Israel against instigating a flare-up in the region, in order to give the French government time to bring Britain and the United States round to its way of thinking. In conclusion he stressed that as a socialist prime minister he had the welfare and destiny of Israel at heart.

Notes

1. Also sent to Elath in London.
2. See No. 119, n. 1.

144. J. Herzog (Jerusalem) to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 12-13 March 1956

Coded Tel. IWA773, 774; Inc.: 93.01/2213/7

Summary

Herzog reports on a conversation between Anderson and Ben-Gurion and Sharett.

1. The conversation began with Anderson's report on his meetings with Nasser. Anderson asked about the Johnston plan. Nasser replied that he had discussed it with the Syrians but because of the instability in Syria its government was unable to decide. With regard to a meeting with an Israeli personality, he replied that he could not guarantee its safety. With regard to the position of the other Arab states on contact between Egypt and Israel through the United States, he replied that he did not control the other governments. He emphasised that on certain issues Jordan and other states were liable to be more sensitive than Egypt. He reiterated his answers from previous meetings with regard to the refugee issue, territorial continuity,[3] flights and free passage in the Canal, and stressed that if a settlement was reached Egypt would treat Israel like any other state. Anderson then brought up the subject of the situation on the borders and pointed out that the United States viewed the Syrian incident very gravely.[4] He asked Nasser to use his influence with the Syrians to return the boat and the people. Nasser promised to do this and reiterated his suggestion for moving forces away from the border.[5] Nasser again stressed that Egypt would not begin a war, but should a war break out it would defend itself.

Anderson summed up by saying that he had done all he could to bring about direct contact, but to no avail. He was prepared to continue with his efforts, but asked if Israel agreed in principle to American mediation and what did it think of the way it was conducted.

2. They then proceeded to discuss the president's reply to the prime minister's letter concerning arms.[6] Anderson had clarified this in a conversation with the president. The president's reply was that, despite the lack of progress, nonetheless the talks had laid a foundation on which it was possible to build. As to the arms, he said: "I have taken full and sympathetic note of your statement of Israel's need for arms. Your request is being given most careful consideration in light of the need both to ensure Israel's security and to create a situation which will be most conducive to peace in the area." Anderson said that he had talked with the president and had stressed Israel's fervent wish for peace. Both the president and the secretary are devoting their energies to Israel's security. He requested emphatically

that Israel should regard the secretary's statements as a sincere expression of his concern over the situation. "Certainly [the] arms question is open." The secretary reiterated his fear that in an arms race the population gap would prove decisive in the long run.

3. Ben-Gurion's and Sharett's replies. Ben-Gurion said that he had been doubtful about the success of the mission but believed that they had to explore all the possibilities. Since the beginning of the mission every effort had been made to ensure its success, but to no avail. Nasser has aspirations to dominate the region, he is trying to buy time in order to complete his army's training, and in the meantime is making empty statements via diplomatic channels. All the attempts to achieve a cease-fire have failed. If he begins murderous provocations there will be no alternative but to react. War is marching towards Israel "like an unfolding Greek drama." The only way to avoid war is to give arms to defend Israel. This was entirely up to the United States. He dismissed Dulles' population gap argument[9] and the referral of Israel to the hopes of great power intervention according to the Tripartite Declaration.[10] As for the mediation proposal, he said that Israel would accept it only if the threat of war was removed. At the moment he does not see realistic chances for mediation. If the envoy was prepared to persist in his efforts, good luck to him, but Israel could only participate if the United States would free it from the threat to its very existence.

Sharett concurred with Ben-Gurion's analysis. He expressed disappointment with the recent statements of the president and the secretary. Israel from the outset had doubted Nasser's sincerity, and in fact the mission had only enabled him to gain time, to accumulate arms, to consolidate his pact with Syria and Saudi Arabia and to penetrate into Jordan. Israel, on the other hand had only lost because the decision concerning the arms had been postponed. Now all hope was lost and Israel could not delay drawing conclusions about its situation. Israel was entitled to an immediate answer regarding the arms either way.

Anderson concluded that Israel was not prepared for further negotiation, whatever form it took, unless it received arms or if circumstances arose that would give it a feeling of security that war would not break out. He again stressed the United States' concern for Israel's welfare and security. Israel's arms request was not simple and was not without complications. The United States had numerous international commitments and Middle Eastern resources were vital for it. Avoiding war was a crucial need and to this end Israel must consult with the United States not only regarding its demand for arms but also with regard to the danger for the whole of the free world. He wished to put a delicate question, whether, as he had gleaned from Sharett's analysis, Israel was expecting an Egyptian operation in the near future, either in the form of a direct attack or by intentional provocation

Ben-Gurion replied that he had no doubt that Nasser would act when he felt that Egypt was powerful enough. Only arms for Israel would deter him.

Anderson replied that he fully appreciated Israel's concern for arms, and he wished to stress that the supply of arms is not and will not be precluded, but he did not agree with the way that Sharett had presented the question, namely, either Israel would receive all of its requirements or would not receive anything at all. The United States would continue to weigh all aspects of the problem. He went on to say that actually they had come to a dead end. Israel's proposal for a meeting had been rejected by Nasser, whereas Israel made the mediation proposal conditional on receiving arms. If Nasser submitted to him or to the State Department proposals for a settlement, they would be conveyed to Israel. He requested that if Israel had ideas it should convey them to him.

Notes

1. On Glubb's dismissal see No. 124, n.1.
2. British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd visited Cairo at the beginning of March, on his way to the conference of foreign ministers of the South East Asian countries in Karachi.
3. Territorial continuity between Egypt and Jordan via the Negev.
4. See No. 125 and n. 1 there.
5. The proposal to move the forces of the opposing sides on the Gaza border during the daylight hours 500 metres away from the border line to prevent incidents – See No. 121.
6. See Nos. 112 and 91.
7. See No. 95, n. 2.
8. In a debate on the budget in the Knesset on 29 February 1956, Ben-Gurion said among other things that his government opposed a preemptive war and would do everything to prevent war. If there was a choice between victory and peace, he would choose peace, and peace was still possible (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, pp. 1238-1239).
9. As stated in Dulles' remarks to Eban at their meeting on 2 March – See No. 120.
10. As stated in Dulles' remarks to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 24 February – See No. 105.
11. See No. 120.
12. At his weekly news conference on 7 March 1956 Eisenhower said among other things that there was no possibility of ensuring peace by speeding arms to a nation which could not absorb more than could 1.7 million of its inhabitants, whereas the Arabs numbered 40 million people (See *Ha'aretz*, 8 March 1956). See also No. 178, n.11.
13. In October 1955 Dulles said to Sharett that any arms list that Israel submitted would receive sympathetic consideration, and if the types of arms were defensive, the consideration would be still more sympathetic (See Eban (from Geneva) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 32, 31 October 1955, 130.09/2310/16).
14. On 9 November 1955 – See No. 15, n. 11.

145. M. Kidron (New York) to the President of the Security Council (New York). 13 March 1956

Notes

1. See No. 11, n. 6.
2. This annex determines the separation between the western front line and the eastern front line in Palestine – See Vol. 3, Appendix F, p. 700. It seems that a mistake has occurred, and this refers to Annex III, which defines the defensive forces which both sides are permitted to keep, see ibid., pp. 700-701.
3. As in the military agreements which Egypt signed with Syria and Saudi Arabia in October 1955, see No. 15, n. 9.
4. In Security Council Resolution S/2322 of September 1951.

146. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 13 March 1956

Draft Coded Tel.; Outg: 130.02/2440/6

Summary

Tekoah reports on a meeting between Sharett and Burns who presented some questions concerning Nitzana on behalf of the secretary-general.[1] He asked if Israel agreed unconditionally to the 3 November proposals. The minister replied that Israel made its agreement conditional on the implementation of Articles VIII (3)[2] and VII.[3] Burns replied that in such a case Egypt would make the implementation of the proposals conditional on the "total implementation" of Articles VII and VIII. Sharett replied that Israel did indeed demand the implementation of these articles but that the sequence was first of all the resolution of the problems according to the November 3 proposals, after that to proceed to the implementation of VIII(3) and VII and after that to proceed to the general implementation of these two articles.

From the remarks of Burns and the secretary-general it is clear that they aim to get Israel to announce that it had changed its position regarding the agreement on Nitzana and thereby to bring about the annulment of the Nitzana agreements, and acceptance of the Egyptian demand for the full implementation of Article VIII according to the Egyptian interpretation, to which the U.N. is apparently inclined. The main gist of this was the prohibition on maintaining police in the area and also calling into question the right to maintain a settlement therein. It was agreed that the secretary-

general's questions would be submitted in writing.[4] The minister promised to include Israel's response in a letter replying to the secretary-general's letter of the 28th.[5]

Afterwards they discussed the maintenance of the cease-fire on the Gaza Strip border. Burns said that General Amer was prepared to take steps to prevent sniper fire on Israeli positions but was not prepared to commit himself not to open fire on mobile patrols. General Amer had reiterated the proposal to move the forces away from the border. Burns told Amer that Israel did not accept this proposal, but he continued to insist on it. Sharett stressed that Amer's response was disappointing. Israel's patrols had been going on for many years and they were disciplined. The firing from the Egyptian side could not go on and it was difficult to tie the hands of soldiers being attacked.

Notes

1. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.
2. See No. 121, n. 5, and Vol. 3, Appendix F, p. 693.
3. This paragraph differentiates between the eastern front line (the Jordanian-Israeli) and the western front line (the Egyptian-Israeli), removes the eastern front line from the effect of the agreement and states that at the western front line, in the territories under Egyptian or Israeli control, only defensive forces will be stationed (See Vol.3 p. 692, see also No. 11 and n. 6 there).
4. The document, dated 12 March 1956, in File 130.16/2947/12
5. See No. 116. Sharett's reply – See No. 157.

147. M. Bartur [Jerusalem] to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 13 March 1956

Orig.: 130.02/2415/22

Summary

Bartur reviews Israel-Burma relations in particular from the aspect of economic cooperation.[1] These relations had progressed from being founded upon ideological closeness and mutual admiration among leaders to relations based on real reciprocity of interest, principally in the economic sphere. In this sphere there were many possibilities, especially in view of the strong desire of the officials and the government to develop a modern economy with all possible speed. Competition between the powers, exemplified by Russian economic penetration, enables Israel, which is not identified with the colonial powers, to operate successfully in Burma. The Americans,

who are watching Israel's economic success in Burma, see in Israel an efficient way of working in the economic sphere against Soviet penetration. This propitious moment should be exploited for accelerated activity, and he suggests beginning immediately to implement some of the industrial projects. To this end they must enlist investors in Israel, raise capital in the United States, and perhaps elsewhere, and strengthen the Israeli legation in Burma. At a later stage it might be necessary to ensure coordination and concentration of all activities in the framework of a separate development company.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 107.
2. ECAFE – the U.N. Economic Committee for Asia and the Far East.
3. Sharett contented himself with initialling this document.

148. M. Kidron (New York) to W. Eytan.[1] 15 March 1956

Coded Tel. NWT137; Inc.: 130.09/2338/23

Summary

Kidron presents the tentative Western plan for resolving the Israel-Arab conflict as it was given to him by the U.N. secretary-general. According to this plan the Security Council would be convened very shortly. At that session the secretary will submit a report on the situation in the Middle East and will propose that he should go to the region in order to study and report on means of strengthening the U.N. machinery for dealing with conflicts arising out of the present tensions. It is the assumption that this proposal will be approved (the Russians will find it difficult to oppose it). Details of the plan will be presented to Israel, Egypt and Iraq before the session, and therefore they will not be invited to the debate. If the plan is approved the secretary-general will go to the region at the beginning of April. In his heart of hearts the secretary-general sees in the mission a first step to laying the groundwork for a peace conference to be convened in the future. He is not under the illusion that peace will be achieved in the near future.

From another source Kidron had learnt that it will be decided in the State Department to link the delivery of arms to Israel with a dramatic policy move that will conceal their retreat from their previous position. Possibly, this plan or another might serve as a basis for such a deal.

Notes

1. A copy of the telegram was sent to Eban in Washington.
2. On the intention of the Americans to raise the subject of the Arab-Israeli dispute in the Security Council, see No. 154.

149. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in London. 15 March 1956

Coded Tel. 582; Outg: 130.13/2595/7

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between the British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, and the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs.

The conversation was held in the framework of Lloyd's visit to Israel and was long and comprehensive.

Lloyd began by reviewing the situation in the Arab countries. He noted that he was most concerned about Egypt, since nobody knew what its intentions were. It seemed to him that Nasser had ambitions to expand from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean. The overall picture in the region was one of instability and the Arab-Israeli conflict was an additional factor in the same web. There was a real danger of Soviet penetration, and no clear way could be seen just now to prevent the Arab states from falling into the arms of the Soviet Union.

The prime minister said that the situation was even more serious than emerged from Lloyd's description. The principal problem is Egypt, behind which Russia is working. The danger of its penetration is hovering not only over the Middle East but over the whole of Africa. In order to achieve his goals Nasser has to destroy Israel. He is preparing for war. The moment he feels himself sufficiently strong, namely, when he has absorbed the large amount of arms he has received, he will attack Israel. Only one thing can prevent this – correcting the balance of forces that has been upset. Both England and the United States are refusing to sell arms to Israel. If Israel receives arms there will not be war.

Selwyn Lloyd replied that if the West supplies arms to Israel, the Soviets will increase the supply of weapons to the region and Israel will find itself surrounded by countries equipped with Soviet arms and Soviet experts. The British wish to prevent an arms race. The supplying of arms to Israel will also adversely affect the friendship that some countries in the region have for Britain.

They then discussed the Tripartite Declaration. Ben-Gurion and Sharett dismissed its efficacy; it was not a contractual commitment and the chances of the United States or Britain coming to Israel's aid were slim. Lloyd replied that his country and the United States definitely intended to implement the declaration should the need arise. Britain and the United States had large forces in the region which could be mobilised and overpower Egypt in a matter of hours.

Lloyd reiterated the proposal to demilitarize a 500-yard strip along the border in Gaza, on both sides of the border. A physical barrier would also be erected and the U.N. Observer Force would be reinforced. Ben-Gurion and Sharett rejected the proposal. It removed a considerable amount of territory from Israeli sovereignty and there was no assurance that the U.N. forces could guarantee quiet. This demilitarized area would only facilitate infiltration and incursion into Israel.

Lloyd asked about Israel's contribution towards a settlement. The prime minister replied that Israel made no territorial demands on Egypt, but it had no intention of making territorial concessions. Neither would it give way on the issue of Jerusalem and it insisted on preserving the status quo. It would not accept refugees, except for a few thousand in the framework of family reunification. On the other hand, it could contribute through its experience in settlement, absorption and agricultural development.[6]

Notes

1. Not found.
2. See No. 124, n.1.
3. Alludes to riots that took place in Jordan in December 1955 during the visit of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Gerald Templer. His visit was designed to bring Jordan into the Baghdad Pact – See No. 5 and n. 5 there.
4. In February 1951, see Vol. 6, No. 68.
5. Morrison, a Labour Party member, was appointed foreign secretary in March 1951. On 23 April 1951 he sent a letter to Ben-Gurion, in which it said that he had heard from Robertson about his visit to Israel, and suggested the establishment of military cooperation between Israel and Britain (See Vol. 6, No. 138). For various reasons Ben-Gurion delayed his reply (See M. Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, Vol. 2, pp. 905-909 [Hebrew]). Meanwhile the Conservatives returned to power in Britain and Ben-Gurion's reply (dated 28 November 1951) was addressed to the new foreign secretary, Anthony Eden (see Vol. 6, No. 508). Ben-Gurion did not repeat the proposal he had made at the time to Robertson, for attachment of Israel to the British Commonwealth, but suggested military cooperation between Israel and Britain, as Morrison had suggested to him. In Eden's reply, dated 30 January 1952 (see Vol. 7, Nos. 38 and 39) it was proposed that a British delegation would visit Israel to look into the subject. The delegation arrived in October 1952, but the visit produced no practical results and the matter lapsed (see ibid., Nos. 380 and 385).

6. In another telegram Sharett reported on a number of additional conversations with Lloyd which took place on private occasions: regarding the arms, he said to Sharett: "In your place I wouldn't be pessimistic." Regarding the resumption of the work in the Jordan river channel he actually begged Israel not to resume the work. Sharett did not give any undertaking. Lloyd requested emphatically that the content of his talks in Israel not be conveyed to the opposition in his country. Sharett promised to respect his wishes. Sharett asked if the joint opposition to Nasser might not create a backdrop for some cooperation with Israel. He made no promises (See Sharett to Elath, Tel. 583, 15 March 1956, 130.09/2321/1).

150. F.E. Shinnar (Cologne) to M. Sharett. 15 March 1956

Coded Tel. 538; Inc.: 130.09/2354/4

Summary

Shinnar reports on a letter he has just received from Brentano according to which the German government had decided to set up a liason office (Dienststelle) in Israel which would be more or less parallel to the Israeli mission in Cologne. The timing of the move and function of the office would be decided at a later stage and would be the subject of negotiation. Israel is requested to keep the matter secret until the time agreed upon. Shinnar notes that the letter is not satisfactory, since it does not contain a date and mentions the need for secrecy. He suggests acknowledging receipt of the letter and stating that he will reply to it after consulting with his government. He requests to come to Israel for consultations.[4]

Notes

1. No. 139.
2. See Sharett to Shinnar, Tel. 737, 12 March 1956, 130.02/2354/2.
3. See No. 102, n. 3.
4. From a Note for the Record, dated 16 March, it emerges that Shinnar held a phone conversation with Sharett, in which he received instructions to confirm to Brentano the receipt of his letter and to state that a relevant reply would be forthcoming later on. Shinnar added that efforts were being made to "correct" the Brentano letter, but it appears that these efforts were in vain. It is quite likely that in this conversation Sharett approved Shinnar's coming to Israel (the Note in File 93.43/304/4).

151. Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 15 March 1956

Copy: 130.11/2507/4

Summary

The director-general submits the conclusions of a committee which drew up guidelines with regard to the meetings of Israeli representatives with Soviet diplomats.[1] According to these guidelines, in the event of their meeting with their Soviet counterparts (and they should not go out of their way to seek such opportunities) they must dispel the impression that Israel resents the arms deal with Egypt since Israel has a fundamentally anti-Soviet stance. They must stress the real and grave danger to Israel following the Czech deal. They must stress that the deal runs counter to one of the recognised principles of Soviet foreign policy which is its opposition to aggressive pacts. By approving it the Soviet Union had made possible the creation of the aggressive pact between Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. They must explain that the deal violated the arms balance, and Israel protested whenever the balance was violated, even when this was done by the West (for example, in the treaty between Egypt and Britain on the evacuation from Suez).[2] If the Soviet representatives asked why Israel had not approached the Soviet Union to request arms, they must stress that the Soviet Union had hastened to deny in the press any rumour about the possibility of their supplying arms to Israel. In the event of such a conversation they must protest against Khrushchev's remarks about Israeli aggression,[4] stress Israel's opposition to the Baghdad Pact[5] and condemn the contradiction between the Soviet declarations in favour of peace and its activities in the Middle East which were bringing an aggressive war against Israel closer.

Notes

1. See No. 14.
2. In accordance with the British-Egyptian agreement of October 1954.
3. See No. 117 and n. 3 there.
4. In his speech in the Supreme Soviet on 29 December 1955 – See No. 3 (Editorial Note).
5. Ibid.

152. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to President Eisenhower. 16 March 1956

Notes

1. No. 112.
2. No. 91.
3. See No. 15, n. 11.
4. See No. 144, n. 13.
5. For Eisenhower's reply, see No. 228.

153. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 16 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA23; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Hoover, at which Murphy and Russell were also present. Eban summed up the results of the latest efforts of the United States to clarify Nasser's intentions and the conclusions to be drawn from them regarding the danger threatening Israel, which could only be averted by the supply of arms and, in particular, planes and anti-tank weapons. He mentioned the secretary of state's remarks before he left, that if it transpired that there was no chance for peace in the foreseeable future he would view Israel's request for arms sympathetically,[2] and noted the remarks of the president in which he refuted the assumption that the United States was rejecting in principle the supply of arms to Israel.[3] He suggested that the United States should at once proceed to examine Israel's requests.

Hoover replied that the secretary would return within a week and there was no doubt that he would wish to see Eban immediately, and would have to give his evaluation of the problems raised here.

Eban notes that in view of the previous promises made by officials of the State Department which had been cancelled by the secretary, the Department officials would do nothing until the secretary returned. He would cable separately on a conversation with Russell who had clarified a number of important obscure points.[6,7]

Notes

1. No. 127.
2. See No. 120.
3. See No. 112.
4. On the conversation with Hoover see No. 99; in the conversation with Murphy which took place on 16 February, the latter promised that within a few days there would be an affirmative decision on the arms issue (See Eban to the United States Division, Tel. WIA876, 16 February 1956, 93.01/2212/12).
5. See Nos. 122, 123.
6. See No. 154.
7. In a supplementary telegram (Eban to Sharett, WIA22, 16 March 1956, 93.01/2213/7) Eban reported that Hoover had analysed the results of the Anderson mission as follows: Egypt refuses to meet with Israel and Israel refuses for the moment to accept the mediation procedure. This is Russell's reading of the situation. According to the C.I.A. official Kermit Roosevelt, Anderson himself does not report with this false tone of balance, and he suggests that Eban should raise this problem with Anderson when they meet.

154. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 16 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA26; Inc.: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Eban cables on a conversation with Russell, who described the policy of the United States that was shaping prior to the secretary's return.

1. Examining the possibility of selling arms to Israel under conditions that would ensure that the Arab reaction would be as moderate as possible.
2. Exploring the possibility of using the U.N. to ease the tension and to block any potential aggression, including the convening of the Security Council.[2]

The president was prepared to approach Congress during the current session in order to obtain the authority that would enable him to act when the need arose, but he would not do so until it became clear that the U.N. was unable to achieve this goal. The assumption was that the move in the U.N. would fail and then he would approach Congress.

Consequently, they were intending to go to the Security Council and to release arms to Israel coupled with an announcement on a release also to Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

From the conversation it was clear they had reached the conclusion that there was no alternative but to supply arms to Israel. However they were trying to embody this in a wider framework.

Eban responded that the arms supply was urgent and vital. Israel could not participate in any operation that would result in a further delay in the sale of arms. He was sceptical about the whole operation involving the Security Council and the secretary-general. He requests clear instructions.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 122.
2. See No. 148. On 20 March Eban reported that in spite of their doubts the Americans had insisted on the need to convene the Security Council (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, XA111, 20 March 1956, 93.01/221/13). On 21 March they presented a draft resolution whose main points were a request that the U.N. secretary-general take steps to bring about the reduction of tension existing along the armistice lines. The secretary-general is asked, according to that resolution, to report to the Security Council within a month from the adoption of the resolution and to assist the Council to discuss what further action is required. For the final text of the resolution as adopted, see in No. 179 (Editorial Note).
3. See No. 145.
4. Sharett responded that the initiative that had been taken now and the wording of the resolution testify to a new attempt to divert attention and to "delaying tactics" by moving the centre of gravity from the balance of power and the danger of war to the problem of the situation on the borders. Despite this, he suggested trying to introduce several amendments in the American draft resolution (See Sharett to Eban, TNW354, 22 March 1956, 130.09/2312/9).

155. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 16 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA271; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

He reports on a conversation with Russell regarding Israel's request for a loan of 75 million dollars from the Export-Import Bank for a water project.[1] Russell said that the United States would continue to press for the implementation of the Johnston plan, and if it failed, for partial implementation that would enable full implementation in the future. The United States was concerned by Israel's intention to resume the work in the Jordan river channel, which might lead to war in the region, before it had adapted the Johnston plan in the Jordanian part to the new circumstances. He asked if the approval of the loan would enable Israel to postpone resumption of the work in the channel for an additional season so that a less dangerous solution could be found. Eban answered that Israel was interested in the

two plans, that of the Jordan channel and that of the central pipeline. He asked for time to consult with his government.[2] It was clear that the State Department was making the loan conditional on Israel's restraint in the Jordan channel.[3]

Notes

1. A meeting on 9 March between Eban and the Bank's president Waugh preceded this step. The ambassador handed him the loan request letter (in File 130.20/2486/5) and Waugh said that he would bring up the issue for discussion with the Bank's board of directors and would inform the State Department about this (See entry of 9 March, ibid.).
2. See No. 156.
3. The loan was only approved in March 1958, and with a much lower sum than Israel had requested – 24.2 million dollars (See Vol. 13, No. 59).

156. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division. 20 March 1956

Coded Tel. XA103; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Eban reports on a further conversation with Russell regarding the water schemes.[1] Russell asked if he had received an answer to the proposal he had made him and repeated it in a slightly modified way: the approval of the loan, the continuation of the work on the project outside the demilitarized zone, a promise by the United States to assist the Jordan project and to ensure that it would in the end be connected with Benot Yaaqov and Israel's agreement to postpone the work in the demilitarized zone for one year during which the United States would make an effort to implement the Johnston plan. He hinted that if he was able to convey a positive answer to the secretary of state on Wednesday this would have a beneficial effect on other matters.

Notes

1. See No. 155.
2. On this conversation with Dulles see No. 165.

157. M. Sharett [Jerusalem] to D. Hammarskjöld (New York). 20 March 1956

Notes

1. See No. 116.
2. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.
3. In File 130.02/2440/11.
4. See No. 111, n. 3.
5. See No. 11, n. 6.
6. See No. 145.
7. See No. 146.

158. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to C. Hyman (New York). 20 March 1956

Coded Tel. 90; Outg.: 130.09/2331/18

Summary

Sharett writes that in Israel they are astonished by the lack of public reaction to the revelations of the journalist Leon Crystal about the execution of some thirty Jewish writers and poets in the Soviet Union in 1952.[1] It was inconceivable that in the biggest Jewish centre they would let this crime pass in silence. They must not be content with demanding that the Jews of the Soviet Union have their freedom of cultural expression restored, but they must first of all protest to the world at large about this crime. The relevant circles must be aroused to a vigorous public reaction whilst completely obscuring the fact that Israel is behind this initiative. To this end Hyman must get in touch with only one responsible person, who would take upon himself the organisation of the campaign, and to do this would convene a group of writers on his initiative or would activate one of the existing committees.[2]

Notes

1. At the beginning of 1956 the officials of "Bar," the department of the "Nativ" organisation which dealt with information in the western countries concerning the situation of the Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, received information about the execution of over thirty Jewish writers and poets in the Soviet Union in August 1952. In order to make this news public in a manner that would leave no room for doubt and would not be followed in its wake by Soviet denials and vilification, it was decided to assign the task to the journalist Leon Crystal, one of

the editors of *Forwaerts*, a New York Yiddish-language newspaper expressing the views of the Bund, the Left, and Jewish Communists. Moreover, Crystal was due to leave in February 1956 for the Soviet Union in order to learn about the situation of the Jews there. In his articles Crystal explained that he had come into possession of "astounding information" concerning the bitter fate of the Jewish writers and poets (See N. Levanon, *"Nativ" was the Code Name*, pp. 151-152 [Hebrew]).

2. Hyman's reply was not found. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs cabled the news to the Israeli missions abroad, together with instructions to activate the Jews and the public to react in the media and other channels, without themselves appearing with regard to this issue (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel Missions Abroad, 7 March 1956, 130.11/2497/1).

159. D. Ben-Gurion (Tel Aviv) to M. Sharett. 22 March 1956

Orig.: 130.02/2446/11

Summary

Ben-Gurion's letter deals with the relations between himself and Sharett. His conclusion about the situation[1] is that immediately after the danger of war has passed he has no place in the government. His return to the government in 1955 was based on a condition that he thought essential, but Sharett had announced that Ben-Gurion was joining before reading his letter.[2]

Afterwards, when he formed the new government,[3] he had read out its programme in the Knesset and sent Sharett a draft to Geneva.[4] Sharett did not disagree with the programme. It now transpired that the majority in the government were in fact opposed to the programme that had been approved by them.

Sharett's agreement to the Hammarskjöld plan meant agreement that in Nitzana there would only be one kibbutz. Such an agreement had been attributed to him as well. He would never have agreed to such a thing, even if the government had adopted such a resolution at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It was possible that his remarks in the government meeting and in his letter to Sharett signified non-cooperation between the prime minister and minister of defence and the minister of foreign affairs. From now on he would make his remarks in the government meeting as one of the members, even if it was a minority opinion, and the majority would decide. He would continue to serve as prime minister and minister of defence for as long as the great danger persisted.[5]

Notes

1. Refers to verbal exchanges which took place in the government meeting on 18 March concerning the negotiations between Israel and the U.N. in Nitzana. Ben-Gurion, who was not happy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' position, announced that in future he would not take part in consultations on this matter outside the government framework. He would hear about things only as a member of the government, in the context of a government debate. Sharett responded in writing and said that he was not convinced "that the prime minister is authorised to withhold from one of the ministers his advice or his approval in urgent matters which required this in the minister's view, except where the prime minister thinks that it is best to bring it before the whole government." He added that he was not prepared "to agree that it was permitted to the minister of defence, or another minister, to refuse to enter into discussion with one of his colleagues on issues requiring close contact between them." And he summed up: "I regret to conclude that in my view your position amounts to non-cooperation between the prime minister and the minister of defence and the minister of foreign affairs. Such a thing is inconceivable in any normal democratic government" (See the stenographic record of the government meeting, ISA, 18 March 1956; the minister of foreign affairs to the prime minister, 20 March 1956, 120.02/2446/11).
2. In his letter to Sharett dated 21 February 1955 on the eve of taking up the post of minister of defence, Ben-Gurion said among other things that if he were to learn in the near future that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was intervening in security matters and the prime minister were to approve the intervention of the minister of foreign affairs [i.e., Sharett himself] and his staff, as prime minister you would have to receive the defence portfolio from me, or to appoint someone else in my place" (Quoted in Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, Vol. 3, p. 1126 [Hebrew]).
3. The government headed by Ben-Gurion was established on 2 November 1955.
4. Sharett was staying at the time in Geneva and held meetings with the foreign ministers of the Four Powers concerning the supply of arms to Israel. S. Kahane from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought Sharett the text of the speech that Ben-Gurion was going to make in the Knesset as well as a letter containing three questions: 1) Is there a chance that Israel will receive arms, and from whom? 2) Is there a danger that they will continue sending arms to Egypt, Syria, etc.; and who will send? 3) What is the attitude of each of the Powers to Nasser? (The letter, of 28 October, and Sharett's reply of 30 October, in File 130.02/2446/11).
5. Sharett replied that his opposition to the establishment of a new settlement in the Nitzana region applied to the coming weeks, and was not meant to tie Israel's hands for an unlimited period of time. The majority of the government members agreed with him and he was sure that this majority position would not have been different had armistice matters been handled by Ben-Gurion as minister of defence (The letter, dated 22 March, ibid.).

160. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 23 March 1956

Coded Tel. 445; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau. They began by discussing the arrangements for his forthcoming visit to Israel. Pineau said that he would wish not only to meet people but also to see the country.[1] He reported on his talks with Nehru and Nasser.[2] Nehru had explained his policy of neutrality and said that in order to fight against communism he could not adopt American methods in his poor country, and he was obliged to maintain correct relations with both blocs. He barely talked about Israel. In his talk with Nasser the latter explained that there was no point at all in war with Israel. On the contrary, he needed at least ten years of peace in order to set his country on its feet. Nasser complained about the sale of arms to Israel, spoke about the refugee problem and expressed apprehension about the immigration to Israel that was strengthening it and forcing it to expand. Pineau suggested to Britain and the United States convening a three-way consultation in order to adopt a joint policy on the sale of arms to the Middle East. He said that France would demand the increased arming of Israel and a restoration of the balance of forces. If they reached agreement, all the better, and if not – France would act on its own as it had done in the affair of the 12 Mystères.[4] Such a conference would serve, in his view, as an opening for the convening of a Four Power conference. Russia's presence in the Middle East was an established fact and could not be ignored.

He spoke at length about the supply of arms to Israel. The sale of the 12 Mystères had finally been approved, and he confirmed that he would agree to a further 12. He also agreed to sell 12 Type-II Mystères. Tsur stressed that these were not a substitute for the Type IV. On the other hand Pineau was opposed to continuing with the sale of tanks until after consulting with Britain and the United States. Tsur protested, and after an argument they reached an agreement that a number of tanks would be delivered in order to prevent a vacuum until the Three Power decision was announced.

Notes

1. In the end Pineau did not visit Israel, Syria or Lebanon.
2. Pineau visited Karachi to attend the council of foreign ministers of SEATO which took place between 6-8 March. He stopped in Cairo on his way from Karachi to Paris.
3. Morocco and Tunisia gained independence from France in March 1956.
4. See No. 143.

161. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 23 March 1956

Coded Tel. 931; Outg: 130.09/2326/5

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between Sharett and Soviet Ambassador Abramov. Sharett explained Israel's reservations about the initiative to convene the Security Council,[1] which was nothing more than an attempt to distract attention from the root of the problem which was the violation of the balance of arms. Essentially, the proposal to broaden the authority and numbers of the U.N. observers seemed to him to be ineffectual and impractical. Israel also opposed the proposal to move the forces away from the border, as this would create a no man's land that would only encourage incidents. If, after all, the Council decided to send the secretary-general to the region, it should be arranged that the terms of his authority should be as general as possible. Sharett said at the end that the aim of the talk was that the Soviet Union should know Israel's views before it raised its hand in a vote that determined the fate of small nations. Abramov listened and did not react.

Note

1. See Nos. 148 and 154.

162. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 23 March 1956

Coded Tel. 808; Inc.: 130/02/2455/9

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation he had with Kirkpatrick on the issue of arms. Kirkpatrick said that two items of weaponry which had been held up at the time had been released (cannons for a torpedo boat and 6 night fighter planes). As for the rest of the items that had been held up, he had no answer yet.[1] To Elath's question about the Centurions, he replied that Israel's requests for arms were now being discussed in Washington and decisions would be reached jointly with the Americans. Elath notes that this is the first

time that he has been told explicitly that the issue of Israel's arms requests was no longer just a matter between Israel and Britain but depended on the United States. Elath believes that the remarks were made in order to inform Israel that it had no hope of receiving arms from Britain before the United States decided to supply arms to Israel.

Notes

1. See No. 6.
2. Sir Victor Raikes, a British Member of Parliament (Conservative), met with Elath on 20 March and told him that changes for the better were expected in the supply of arms to Israel. Even if Israel did not receive all that it had requested, it would receive "important items" which would strengthen its defence capacity (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 797, 21 March 1956, 130.09/2321/2).

163. United States Division (Washington) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 26 March 1956

Coded Tel. TNW362; Outg: 130.02/2455/9

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between Sharett and Lawson which dealt mainly with the American move to convene the Security Council.[1] Sharett was critical of the wording of the resolution which was in the process of being drafted in the Council. Instead of focusing on the dangerous situation existing in the Middle East and clearing the way for the supply of arms to Israel in order to deal with this situation, the resolution is seeking to deal with the situation on the borders. This is an important problem but cannot be compared to the main problem which is the threat to Israel's security. In addition to this, instead of allowing the secretary-general to look for ways to resolve the situation, he had been given in advance a list of remedies for the situation, and this constituted prejudicing the issue. The minister expressed the hope that the convening of the Council was not just one more attempt to postpone the decision on the question of the supply of arms to Israel. Lawson's only response was that he was convinced that the convening of the Council was not intended to postpone the decision on arms.

Notes

1. See No. 154.
2. On 26 October 1955, see Eban (from Paris) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1955, 130.02/2454/8.
3. See No. 149.
4. See No. 15, n. 9.
5. On 23 March 1956 agreement was reached between the commander of the Jordanian army, Major-General Radi Innab, who visited Damascus, and the Syrian commander in chief, Brigadier Shawkat Shuqair, on a plan of military cooperation in the event of an Israeli attack (See *Ha'aretz*, 25 March 1956).

164. M. Bartur [Jerusalem] to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 26 March 1956

Copy: 130.11/2512/8

Summary

Bartur writes about the need to expand trade relations with the Soviet Union and with the whole eastern bloc.[1] The volume of trade had indeed increased in recent years, but was still limited in particular to the export of citrus fruit on the one hand and the import of crude oil on the other. In volume it did not exceed 3-4 percent of the total overseas trade of Israel. Objective conditions enabled its expansion and diversification, but the obstacle was political – the refusal of the Soviet Union to sign a trade agreement with Israel. He proposed the following path of action:

1. Identifying publicly with the Russian position that opposes the Western embargo on strategic goods. Israel could explain this by its fundamental opposition to a discriminatory trade policy in peacetime (the Arab boycott);
2. A letter to the Soviet Union indicating Israel's desire to expand trade relations and to sign a trade agreement;
3. Expressing Israel's readiness to equip one or two industrial plants with Soviet equipment.
4. Exchanging delegations of technicians in the fields of agriculture and industry.

Notes

1. Trade relations between Israel and the Soviet Union were conducted in the framework of two ad hoc agreements, the first for the purchase of heating fuel and crude oil, and

the second for the sale of citrus fruit and bananas. The agreements were signed at the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954, and extended in 1955 and 1956. They were unilaterally cancelled by the Soviets after the Sinai Campaign.

2. The Economic Commission for Europe was established in 1947. It was one of five regional commissions established by the U.N. Social and Economic Council. Its members were the European countries, the United States and Canada. It was designed to ascertain the economic and technological problems of Europe and to suggest ways of action.

165. R. Shiloah [Washington] to M. Sharett. 28 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA70; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Shiloah reports on Eban's talk with Dulles. Dulles told him that the president had given careful consideration to the prime minister's letter[1] and would reply very soon.[2] The United States was engaged in reviewing its Middle East policy. The failure of the attempt to induce Nasser to adopt a peaceful policy and to work towards a settlement had made it conclude that he was no longer entitled to preferential treatment. Dulles was not yet prepared to explain how the change in policy would be expressed, and perhaps the change might not be expressed specifically in full identification with Israel, since such a development was not in Israel's best interest and would not help the mutual aim. In the view of the United States it would be best to concentrate Israel's purchasing efforts mainly in European countries. The United States had helped Israel in the Mystère deal and would view further projects of this kind sympathetically.

He added that the United States was very concerned about the chances of resumption of work in the Jordan river channel. He asked Israel to refrain from this at this tension-filled time. He had learned about Israel's approach to the Export-Import Bank for development and investment projects.[3] From a political standpoint their attitude would be favourable on condition that Israel does not endanger the situation in the Middle East by the resumption of the Jordan work.

In his replies Eban first of all referred to the arms issue.[4] He described the rapid rate of arming of the Egyptians and Israel's failure to counter it. All that Israel had managed to obtain until now were 12 Mystère planes and perhaps a further similar number. The feeling in all the western capitals was that there was an undeclared American embargo on Israel, and they would not supply arms as long as they did not see the United States participating, at least partially, in supplying arms to Israel. It would be desirable for the

United States to explain this to its allies and to participate practically in the supply, even if only with one item from Israel's purchase list. Dulles agreed, after the ambassador persisted, that Israel should bring various proposals to the State Department regarding items which the United States could supply.[7] He also promised to talk with Pearson after he heard that the F-86 planes were manufactured in Canada.

Eban also raised the subject of water. It was inconceivable for Israel to give up a part of the Jordan water. If the United States wished Israel to stop the work in the demilitarized zone, what was the plan and its proposal as far as the Jordan was concerned? Russell, who was present at the talk, replied that there were several projects connected with the Jordan which did not conflict with the Johnston plan, that Israel could carry out simultaneously with a similar plan on the Jordanian side. The ambassador replied that Israel had heard a number of proposals and in his opinion it would be best if the United States submitted to Israel a detailed plan for a joint policy with regard to the work on the Jordan projects. It was agreed that, when Johnston returned in a week's time, the United States government would make a detailed proposal in the spirit of what was said in the conversation.[11]

The ambassador concluded by saying that the following day and on Friday he would be holding talks in the State Department that would give a more practical shape to the two subjects raised in the conversation.[12] They had to specify in the list of arms the items demanded from the United States administration and those for which Israel demands American assistance with other countries.[13]

Notes

1. No. 152.
2. From the American documentation it emerges that Dulles informed the president that Ben-Gurion's letter did not require an immediate reply (See *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XV, No. 201 n.1) and in fact Eisenhower only replied to Ben-Gurion on 30 April – See No. 228.
3. See No. 155.
4. Before the conversation with Dulles, Eban received an urgent telegram from Sharett, which quoted from a reliable source that Dulles was inclined to postpone any decision on arms until after the U.N. secretary-general's Middle East visit. Therefore he instructed Eban that should Dulles in the course of the conversation announce a further delay he was to respond that Israel considered this a negative decision (See Sharett to the Israel embassy in Washington, Tel. IW825, 28 March 1956, 130.09/2311/5).
5. Alludes to Nasser's promises in 1955 that he would persuade Syria to remove its opposition to the Johnston plan and to the Anderson mediation mission.
6. See No. 120.
7. Israel's list was submitted on 16 November 1955 – See Shiloah to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 512, 16 November 1955, 130.09/2311/4.

8. The remarks were made at their meeting in Paris on 26 October 1955 – See Eban (from Paris) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1955, 130.02/2456/8.
9. However, on 7 April 1956 the Israeli ambassador in Rome was informed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the United States Embassy had informed them that Washington could not approve the sale of F-86 planes to Israel and requested them to end the talks with Israel in this regard (See Sasson to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 200, 8 April 1956, 130.09/2357/5).
10. A reference to the "Eastern Ghor" plan for the waters from the Yarmuk to flow into a canal along the Jordan Valley, from where they would be carried by subsidiary canals to irrigate the fields in the region.
11. See No. 229.
12. In a conversation with Allen the next day, Eban stressed that the United States had to do two things: 1) to encourage other countries to sell arms to Israel and in the case of necessity to grant the necessary licenses, 2) to decide on an immediate sale of certain arms from the list that Israel had submitted in order that the world should clearly understand the United States position. Allen replied that from the standpoint of the United States the easiest thing would be to approve the sale of radar and the other electronic equipment which Israel had requested. If this did not achieve the desired goal they must think about anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. He again returned to the issue of the F-86 planes manufactured in Italy. Salmon, the military attaché, pointed out that nobody would be impressed by the sale of radar and electronic equipment which could be obtained on the private market. At the end of the conversation an Israeli arms request was again submitted (See Eban to the United States Division, Tel. WIA79, 29 March 1956, 93.01/2212/13).
13. For Sharett's response, see No.167.

166. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 29 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA75; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Eban describes his conversation with Heeney, the Canadian ambassador to the United States. Heeney said that he had participated in a conversation between Dulles and Pearson in which Dulles had asked Canada to sell F-86 planes to Israel. Pearson was impressed by the advice given him by Dulles and said that he would bring it before the Canadian cabinet. In order to assist the cabinet to reach a positive decision he asked the United States to approve a number of items in the Israeli arms request. Otherwise he feared that Parliament would voice criticism as to why Canada was taking responsibility for an act which the United States was evading. Dulles replied that this matter was currently being discussed. Pearson said that he would summon the Israeli ambassador, Comay, at the beginning of the following

week.[1] Heeney said that he had received an instruction from Pearson to continue to press the United States to release certain American arms to Israel so that Canada could give a positive answer.

Note

1. The meeting took place on 3 April. Comay requested approval for the supply of 24 F-86 planes. Pearson voiced criticism of the leaders of the United States who urged others to do what they themselves felt would embarrass them. He promised to bring the request before the Canadian cabinet (See Comay to Sharett, Tel. 158, 3 April 1956, 130.09/2456/1).

167. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (New York). 30 March 1956

Coded Tel. IWA833; Inc.: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Sharett responds to Eban's report on the meeting with Dulles.[1] This is a most disappointing end to an intensive and lengthy affair which has been going on already for five months. Dulles had reneged on all his promises; the promises of the State Department people had turned out to be baseless. The Israeli representatives must avoid meeting with Russell for a time to demonstrate that Israel did not ascribe any value to talks with him. They should also show reservation in talks with others as well. The question arises whether they can trust any of the promises of the secretary of state and his staff. He intends to summon Lawson and to stress Israel's disappointment.[2] At the same time they must demand the speeding up of the delivery of the second dozen Mystères from France. They must also press for the delivery of certain items from the United States but as a separate matter and not as a part of the main demand for arms which had ended in disappointment.

Notes

1. No. 165.
2. On the conversation with Lawson, see No. 178.
3. See No. 165, n.9.
4. For Eban's response see No. 170.

168. T. Kollek (Washington) to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 30 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA80; Outg: 93.01/2212/13

Summary

Kollek reports on his first impressions from his visit to the United States. He is more optimistic than he had been before. The meeting with Dulles opened new vistas for arms supply from the Western Powers, namely Canada, Italy and France. Israel should however press for an American contribution at least in one of the main items on Israel's list. Israel should get an unequivocal instruction from the U.S. to their representatives in various countries to help Israel to purchase in these countries, especially those items that are manufactured under American license and within the framework of the off-shore arrangement.

169. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 30 March 1956

Coded Tel. 938; Outg: 130.09/2326/5

Summary

The division instructs Avidar that at his forthcoming meeting with Molotov[1] he must state, as a statement of fact and not as a politically motivated declaration, that, since the Czech deal, all of Israel's efforts in the United States were directed to obtaining arms and not for a security treaty or guarantee. He must ask why the Soviet Union did not announce as its political plan for the Middle East direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states without prior conditions and without foreign intervention.

Notes

1. This is in reply to Avidar's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tel. 71, 25 March 1956, 130.09/2326/7) in which he asked for information about Sharett's meeting with Abramov (see No. 161), announced that on 26 March he would request a meeting with Molotov and asked to let him know whether any fresh points had arisen for the forthcoming meeting.
2. See No. 171, n. 1.
3. The meeting with Molotov took place on 2 April. See No. 176.

170. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 31 March 1956

Coded Tel. WIA84; Outg: 93.01/2213/9

Summary

Eban believes that Sharett's angry reaction to the talk held with Dulles[1] was understandable, but uncalled for. For a long period Israel had waged a struggle over the issue of arms. But even when it had submitted its request to the United States, it had not laid down how the United States should make up Israel's lack and had not ruled out an indirect act of assistance. In the course of the struggle it had been hinted to Israel that the United States was looking for a way out by means of indirectly supplying Israel with arms, and in recent days a plan had in fact been taking shape whose main point was support for getting Mystères from France and F-86 planes from Canada. It was possible that, under Canadian pressure, they might be persuaded to make a direct contribution. This solution was complicated, and did not present the Americans in the most favourable light, but why should Israel care as long as its requirements were met? He feared that because of the many and contradictory pressures applied on the United States it would be unable to maintain this solution for a long period. Therefore Israel must translate the American readiness into real arms and ensure that the Americans speak with the other suppliers of the F-86 in the same way they had spoken with Pearson. They must discuss the list of arms with the Americans to ensure there would be concern for the other items, and that the United States too would keep its commitments directly, and finally to take care of the additional dozen Mystères from France.

Eban believes that the campaign to obtain arms will be long drawn out and wearying, and suggests that a special person be appointed to deal with the matter. The man equipped for this task is Teddy Kollek, and Sharett must decide as soon as possible whether he wishes to continue with this campaign at full steam. He should also remember that apart from the arms there are other outstanding issues between Israel and the United States, such as the loan from the Export-Import Bank,[8] the increase of the grant-in-aid and the water project. Israel must on no account neglect any of these and simply be content with challenging the United States. Therefore he suggests with the utmost seriousness reviewing the tactical line proposed in Sharett's response.[9]

Notes

1. No. 167.
2. See Nos. 129, 141.
3. See No. 166.
4. Members of the House of Representatives Scott and Keating met in the State Department with Murphy and Allen. At the meeting the situation was explained to them along the lines of the secretary's remarks to Eban. Scott and Keating replied that it was inconceivable to have a plan that did not contain a direct American contribution, since this was essential not only to encourage other countries to assist Israel but also from internal policy considerations. Allen replied that perhaps the United States would focus on assistance to Israel in the sphere of anti-tank defence. Murphy summed up saying that the Administration was attempting to defuse the tension with Israel and wished to settle things so that in a few weeks' time Israel could announce publicly that it appreciated the assistance given to it by the United States in a time of trouble (See Eban to the United States Division, W174, 29 March 1956, 130.02/2455/9).
5. See No. 163.
6. See No. 153.
7. See No 165, n. 9.
8. See No. 155.
9. For Sharett's response see No. 173.

171. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 31 March 1956

Draft telegram; Outg: 130.11/2507/8

Summary

The division reports on Sharett's meeting with Soviet Ambassador Abramov. The minister was responding to a report from the Tass news agency regarding the resumption of work in the Jordan river channel.[1] He said that Israel rejects the claim that the diversion constitutes a violation of the armistice agreements and is contrary to the Security Council resolution. There was no aggressive intent in this project. The armistice agreement did not forbid carrying out work in the demilitarized zone, and the precedent of the draining of the Huleh lake proves this.[2] The Security Council had not adopted any resolution against the work and had noted with satisfaction the statement of the Israeli representative on the suspension of the works pending a temporary clarification. Since then two and a half years had elapsed. Israel had an incontrovertible right to resume the work and actually it was Syria's opposition which was aggressive and reactionary.

Abramov asked whether it was impossible to reach agreement between countries with shared rivers and gave as an example the agreement signed between Norway and the Soviet Union. Sharett replied that the example was not valid, since the Jordan was entirely in Israeli territory and was not shared with Syria. Moreover, the Norwegians were prepared for negotiation, even though they had set exorbitant conditions, whereas Syria does not agree to any negotiation.[4]

Notes

1. On 27 March a Tass report was published in *Izvestya* entitled "War Hysteria in Israel." Among other things it said that the resumption of diversion of the Jordan waters in the demilitarized zone constituted a blatant violation of the armistice agreement and of the Security Council resolution. These attempts at this time were apparently designed to increase tension artificially in the Middle East, and possibly to ignite a military conflict between Israel and the Arab states (See the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 74, 28 March 1956, 130.09/2326/7).
2. In fact the Security Council decided on 18 May 1951 (Resolution S/2157) that Israel must stop the drainage work in the Huleh in the demilitarized zone, and that from now on General Reilly, the chief of staff of U.N.T.S.O., would be dealing with the issue. Israel maintained that the Security Council resolution alluded to work in areas under Arab ownership, but not to work on Jewish-owned land. After an argument Reilly accepted the Israeli version and the work was resumed (See Vol. 6, Nos. 372, 376).
3 See No. 132, n. 4.
4. Minutes of this conversation, dated 9 April 1956, in File 130.11/2507/4.

172. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 1 April 1956

Coded Tel. 834; Outg: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Sharett cables that he has postponed his conversation with Lawson and is awaiting clarifications from Eban. In the meantime he does not understand the situation. Dulles continues to reject the direct supply of arms to Israel.[1] From a conversation with the Canadian ambassador in the United States[2] it now appears that the Americans were only passing the buck to the Canadians without doing anything to obligate them to supply arms to Israel. The conversation with Allen[3] had also been disappointing. The formula "not excluded" which the president[4] and the secretary[5] had used was non-binding and in effect meant "not included." It seemed patently clear to him that

Israel must state categorically that as far as it was concerned, it had ended the negotiations and had concluded that the United States had decided not to lift a finger, since the reasons given for not supplying arms from the United States doomed the appeal of the United States to other states from the outset. His positive suggestion was to continue contacts in Ottawa and Rome, and if they met with a refusal, to inform the State Department.

Notes

1. See No. 145.
2. See No. 166.
3. See No. 165, n. 12.
4. See No. 120.
5. On 13 December Allen asked Eban to convey to Sharett Dulles' apology for having been unable to inform him about the United States decision on the supply of arms to Israel for various reasons, the principal one being the recent incident on the Syrian border (the Lake Tiberias operation). See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. WIA589, 13.12.1955, 93.01/2212/2.
6. No. 168.
7. No. 165.
8. At a meeting held on 26 March Russell said that the final decision concerning the arms was close: "It will not be such as to lead to dancing in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but the Israeli government will surely see in it a considerable advance" (See Shiloah to Herzog, Tel. WIA64, 26 March 1956, 93.01/2213/9).

173. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 1 April 1956

Coded Tel. 838; Outg: 130.09/2311/5

Summary

Sharett replies to Eban's assessment on his conversation with Dulles concerning the arms.[1] He surveys the history of American promises and rejections and notes that from the outset it had been Israel's intention to receive from the Americans not advice, recommendations and authorisations, but arms in kind. He did not suggest breaking off contacts with them altogether, but Israel must express disappointment and a grave undermining of trust as the best means of obtaining something. Consequently it must be explained to them that, after all this long drawn out episode, Israel was waiting for deeds, and if they were not forthcoming Israel would not turn to them any more. He intended to speak in these terms to Lawson

and a report on this conversation[2] would serve as explanatory guidelines for Eban.

Notes

1. See No. 170.
2. See No. 178.

174. A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington) to M. Sharett. 2 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA424; Outg: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Eban and Shiloah respond by personal telegram to Sharett's assessments and suggestions regarding relations between Israel and the United States.[1]

The overall approach adopted by the State Department stated that Soviet penetration attempts in the Middle East must be thwarted, and to this end peace must be established between Israel and Nasser, whom the United States considers to be the key to the Arab world. The Americans felt that on account of these peacemaking efforts a favourable response to Israel's defensive arms request should be deferred. Nasser's refusal to accede to the United States initiative had created a new situation from which the following conclusions might be drawn: 1. Israel's defensive capability must be ensured; 2. the United States had despaired of Nasser but not of all chances of influence in the Arab world; 3. There is still an essential need to maintain and enhance the influence of the United States in the parts of the Arab world that are not lost. 4. Therefore Israel's needs have to be met in a way that will not imply that the United States is identifying wholeheartedly with Israel against the Arab world. 5. To this end Israel's arms requirements have to be met from Western sources outside the United States and in addition, the United States would aid the Jordan project, increase the grant and give a bank loan. In talks held recently with Dulles[4,5] Israel was invited to cooperate in this plan. The secretary of state believes that this policy can only exist in an atmosphere of trust and not in an atmosphere of undeclared hostility.

Eban and Shiloah recommend adopting the following approach: to obtain the required arms in Canada and Italy etc., to hasten the decision about the loan and the Jordan project and to cooperate in a policy that was intended to

weaken Nasser. In their view, Israel would not succeed in progressing in an atmosphere of open conflict with the United States.[6]

Notes

1. No. 173.
2. The Anderson mission – See No. 144.
3. See No. 166.
4. See No. 165.
5. See ibid., and No. 120.
6. Sharett's response – See No. 190.

175. Editorial Note

Secretary of State Dulles' Press Conference: United States Policy in the Middle East.

On 3 April Secretary of State Dulles held a press conference in Washington. He began by saying that there was no change in the policy of supplying United States arms to Israel. Israel's requests had not been rejected and were still being discussed. In response to a question he pointed out that small shipments of arms to the region by other countries could help to maintain stability in the region. The United States had two goals in the Middle East: to prevent war and to preserve the independence of the countries of the region. The long-term security of these countries would be founded on respect for international law and the maintenance of friendly relations between neighbouring countries, and not only upon arms. The United States, as a friend of both sides, would act to create such an atmosphere in the Middle East.

(See U.S. Information Service, *Daily News Bulletin*, Tel Aviv, 4 April 1956.)

176. Israel Ambassador in Moscow to the East European Division. 3 April 1956

Coded Tel. 77; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

Israel Ambassador Avidar reports on his talk with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov. During most of the conversation they argued about the responsibility for the state of relations between Israel and the Arab states, with Molotov accusing Israel of aggressive intentions and Avidar referring to the Czech arms deal, which he claimed had undermined stability in the region. Avidar's conclusion from his conversation was that in the foreseeable future they could expect the full support of the Soviet Union for the Arab states and a lack of consideration with regard to Israel's position. In his view the conversation precluded any possibility whatsoever of appealing to the Soviet Union for arms at this time.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 169.
2. See No. 66, n. 2.
3. See No. 132, n. 2.
4. For a full account of the conversation see Avidar's letter to the East European Division, 15 April 1956, 130.11/2507/4.

177. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett and S. Peres. 3 April 1956

Coded Tel. 591; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports that in the conversation with the French Air Minister Laforest agreement was expressed to sell Israel 12 additional Mystère IV planes. However, Pineau asked to delay the signing until the first 12 reached Israel. In addition there is agreement for 6 additional Ouragan planes. There is also willingness to sell 30 Mystère II type planes, and in fact they were making the sale of the Ouragans conditional on the purchase of the Mystère II.

Note

1. The first Mystère planes reached Israel on 12 April.

178. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 4 April 1956

Coded Tel. IW846; 130.09/2311/6

Summary

The division reports on the minister's conversation with United States Ambassador Lawson. Sharett reviewed at length the history of Israel's requests for the supply of arms, an affair that had already lasted for about five months and had ended in disappointment and frustration. Israel's requests had been met with delaying tactics, and the United States had not exerted its influence on the other states to supply arms to Israel, but had only referred Israel to conduct negotiations with them.

Ambassador Lawson simply reiterated the American contention that direct assistance to Israel would impede United States manoeuverability in the Middle East. Sharett replied that he rejected the argument that the supply of arms to Israel meant the division of the region into two blocs, since the United States was supplying arms to Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The United States' admission that it was concerned about its standing in the region would only lower its prestige. In conclusion the ambassador sought to clarify two points: 1. Did he understand correctly from the minister's remarks that Israel saw in the secretary of state's reply to Eban[1] the final word and why was Israel not willing to wait an extra month? Sharett replied that he would not trouble the ambassador further regarding the arms issue unless a change took place, and the United States had to create a situation in which it would be worthwhile to broach the arms issue again. 2. Had he understood correctly that Israel desired a direct positive response from the United States, but in the absence of such it wished the United States to influence Canada and Italy? Sharett replied that Israel desired both of these actions. It would study the actions of the United States in Rome and Ottawa, and he hoped it would act effectively.[16]

Notes

1. See No. 165.
2. Refers to two conversations on arms purchase between Sharett and Dulles in October 1955, the first in Paris on 26 October (see Eban to the Foreign Ministry, 130.02/2456/8) and the second in Geneva on 31 October (see No. 144, n. 13).
3. A record of the conversation on 6 December 1955 in File 130.02/2455/8.
4. See No. 172, n. 5.
5. In this letter to Sharett Dulles repeated the remarks that Allen had conveyed to Eban in his name on 13 December 1955, that the United States could not make a decision concerning Israel's arms request for a number of reasons, the main one being the recent incident on the Syrian border (See a summation prepared in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 1956, filed among the telegrams from 8–10 April, 130.02/2456/1).
6. See No. 86.
7. See No. 120.
8. See No. 15, n. 11.
9. See No. 112.
10. In his weekly news conference on 7 March 1956 Eisenhower said among other things that there was no possibility of ensuring peace by rushing arms to a nation which cannot absorb them more than can its 1.7 million inhabitants, when the Arabs numbered 40 million souls (See *Ha'aretz*, 8 March 1956). After Eban and Shiloah protested about these remarks to Murphy (see the embassy in Washington to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 993, 9 March 1956, 93.01/2213/9) Eisenhower corrected himself in a news conference the following week and said: "I never said, and I am sure the secretary of state never said, that we wouldn't furnish arms to Israel. We were hoping for a better solution" (See a summation prepared in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 1956, 130.02/2456/1 and Shiloah to Herzog, Tel. 993, 9 March 1956, 93.01/2213/9).
11. See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), the First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, pp. 1244-245.
12. At a news conference on 30 March Nahum Goldmann said that there was no doubt that the United States would give arms to Israel.
13. See No. 165, n. 12.
14. On 25 February there appeared in the *New York Times* a report from "American officials" concerning the Mystères, placing responsibility for the delay on France (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. NPT60, 26 February 1956, 130.02/2455/9).
15. See No. 99, n.1.
16. In reaction to this conversation, Eban said that there would be no progress in other places if the United States did not act. A way must be found to get the Americans to appeal to the Italians, to ensure that there would be a follow-up to Dulles' appeal to Pearson, and to see that the shipment of the second dozen Mystères be brought forward by release from the NATO quota through United States influence. In addition public pressure had to be created, both general and Jewish, for direct supply, without Israel being involved directly in this pressure. Sharett endorsed Eban's recommendations (See Eban to Sharett, Tel. 107, 7 April 1956, 130.09/2311/8; Sharett to the Israel embassy in Washington, Tel. 861, 8 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).

179. Editorial Note

The Security Council Resolution on the Enforcement of the Armistice Agreements in Palestine

The Security Council debate on the situation on the borders in Palestine ended on 4 April with a resolution empowering the secretary-general to study the question of the observance of the armistice agreements and to take steps, together with all the sides, to reduce existing tensions. These steps included the pullback of forces from the armistice lines, allowing freedom of movement to the U.N. observers along the borders and in the demilitarized and defensive zones, the signing of local agreements to prevent incidents, and rapid reports on violations of the cease-fire. This resolution was adopted unanimously and paved the way for the secretary-general's visit to the Middle East in April-May 1956.

The full text of the resolution is in the Main Volume, pp. 306-307.

180. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 4 April 1956

Coded Tel. 838; Inc.: 130.09/2321/2

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Shuckburgh. His purpose was twofold: a) to hear the British reaction to Dulles' remarks concerning the supply of arms to Israel[1] and b) to discover the extent of their opposition to Nasser, and whether they had drawn from it any positive conclusions regarding their policy towards Israel.

Shuckburgh evaded giving a clear answer to the first issue, and when he was asked if the chances of Israel receiving British arms had increased, he replied that he had nothing new to report just now. He asked about Israel's main requests in this sphere and Elath answered: Centurions and the immediate release of some items which had been approved and not yet released.[2]

Concerning Nasser, Elath reiterated Israel's main thinking and stressed that the problem of Nasser was not exclusively Israel's, but affected the whole standing of the Western countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Shuckburgh replied that he accepted Elath's general assessment concerning Nasser's ambitions but rejected out of hand the accusation that Britain

intended to appease him at Israel's expense. Elath's conclusion from the conversation is that Britain had adopted a negative attitude towards Nasser. Apparently, Lloyd's visit to the region and to Cairo had contributed greatly to the adoption of this new line, but he was careful not to deduce from this that this line would lead to a positive change towards Israel, at least as long as Britain sought to reinforce Nuri al-Sa'id's position and to deliver Jordan from Nasser's embrace.

Notes

1. See No. 165.
2. See No. 210.
3. See No. 225.
4. In his speech on 9 November in the Guildhall in London Eden said, among other things, alluding to the supply of Soviet arms to Egypt: "Yet when nations face each other in hostility, it is not much use blaming them for getting arms whenever they can. It is not the recipients, it is the suppliers who must be mainly responsible."

181. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Permanent Mission to the U.N. 5 April 1956

Coded Tel. 312; Outg: 130.09/2339/6

Summary

Tekoah reports on a conversation between Foreign Minister Sharett and the chief of staff of the U.N. Truce Observation Organization. Sharett reviewed the incidents on the Gaza border[1] and demanded that Egypt be warned of the grave consequences likely to result from aggression. Burns promised to report immediately to the U.N. secretary-general, and said that after his letter to the secretary-general a few weeks previously he informed him that Israel's protest was justified.

Afterwards they discussed the Security Council resolution.[2] Sharett said that although Israel believed that a fundamental change for the better in the situation could only come about through a redress of the balance of forces, it would cooperate in any effort to ease tension. In contrast to the Arabs, Israel was not opposed to arrangements in addition to the armistice agreements, but would not agree to additional measures which were not arranged by means of the armistice agreements. In his view the secretary-general would have to achieve a cease-fire which was important not only for the Gaza border but also for the Jordanian and Syrian borders, to limit

troop concentrations, especially on the Egyptian border, and to ensure faithful compliance with all the armistice clauses. Burns said that that the various proposals had been presented at a time when it did not seem that the sides contemplated going to war. The aim of the proposals was to quash local dangers. He was convinced that the secretary-general would wish in the first instance to explore the readiness of the sides to keep the armistice agreements and to avoid threats and planning for war.

Notes

1. After several months of relative quiet along the Gaza Strip border, the sector heated up. At the end of March there were many incidents of mining and infiltration in this area. On 2 and 4 April Israeli patrols were attacked near Nirim and Kissufim and 4 soldiers were killed. For a detailed account of the aggressive acts committed by Egypt against Israel from the Gaza Strip, see the letters of the Israel Mission to the U.N. to the president of the Security Council, 6 April till 11 April 1956, U.N. Documents S/3557, S/3580, S/3581, S/3582, see also B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, pp. 370-371.
2. See No. 179 (Editorial Note).

182. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Permanent Mission to the U.N. 5 April 1956

Coded Tel. TNW371; Outg: 130.02/2439/7

Summary

Tekoah instructs Eban to approach the secretary-general immediately, following the Security Council resolution,[1] and to ask him to lay stress on the implementation of the armistice agreements and to minimise the importance of previous Security Council resolutions mentioned in this resolution.

He also makes some comments: a. This is the first time that a resolution has been adopted in the Security Council demanding an overall survey of the implementation of the armistice. All the proposals that had been adopted in the past had failed, more because of their nature than because of the attitude of the sides to them. The secretary-general now has to choose between again following a path that had failed, that of palliative measures, or to insist on the need for the sides to keep the agreements stringently. Concentrating on the palliative approach would from the outset ensure the opposition of the Arabs to a serious attempt to reinforce the armistice agreements. b. All attempts to revive the Burns proposals of the past two years were doomed to failure, due to the contradictions between them and because the most

important among them, such as that which talks about pulling back forces five hundred metres, go beyond the bounds of the armistice agreements.

Tekoah sums up that, if the secretary-general wants to make a significant contribution, he must tackle the fundamental problems and demand an absolute cease-fire, the pullback of threatening troop concentrations and the faithful implementation of all the undertakings in the agreements.

Notes

1. See No. 179. (Editorial Note).
2. In this telegram (Tekoah to the Israel Mission to the U.N., No. 100, 22 March 1956, 130.09/2331/18) it says among other things that there was no sense at all in bundling the various resolutions concerning the Gaza Strip together. Any appeal at this stage to the sides to implement them would only cause confusion. To the extent that the resolutions were in line with Burns' proposals it should be remembered that at least on three occasions he himself had changed his position with regard to the efforts needed to prevent incidents on the border.

183. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European and East European Divisions. 5 April 1956

Coded Tel.: Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

On instructions from Israel Tsur talked with the Soviet ambassador in Paris, Vinogradov.[1] In the conversation the Soviet diplomat stressed that the Soviet Union insisted on the principle of territorial status quo on the existing borders and recognised the need to preserve the independence of all the countries in the region. In answer to Tsur's question as to how these principles were compatible with the Soviet Union's support for the claims of the Arabs, he replied that the Soviets had never come out in defence of Arab claims in the region. He dismissed the arms deal as of little importance and mentioned Israel's arms purchases in France, especially the Mystères. He asked what Israel expected from Russia. Tsur replied asking for a public statement on the two aforementioned principles and on their decision to preserve Israel's independence and territorial integrity. When Tsur asked what Russia expected from Israel he was perplexed, and said that he did not deal with the Middle East. During the whole conversation he was in a defensive posture and tried to justify the Soviet Union's policy without any fresh reasoning.

Notes

1. After Avidar's conversation with Molotov on 2 April (see No. 176) Eytan instructed Tsur to meet with Vinogradov, the Soviet ambassador in Paris, in order to clarify the Soviet position on the Middle East crisis and their view on how to solve the problem and to make peace in the region (See Eytan to Tsur, Tel. 903, 4 April 1956, 130.09/2347/1).
2. In February 1953 – See Vol. 8, No. 71.
3. Reference to Sharett's conversation with Molotov on 31 October 1955 – See No. 66.

184. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 6 April 1956

Coded Tel. 552; Outg: 130.16/2951/15

Summary

The ministry made two statements on behalf of the head of the Israeli delegation to the Israel-Egypt Mixed Armistice Commission concerning the incidents on the Gaza Strip border. The second statement said that the regrettable loss of life reported was the result of the rash folly of the Egyptians,[1] who despite repeated warnings had for many months been striking at the border with Israel, had ignored the U.N.'s instructions and rejected a cease-fire. A further statement on 6 April referred to the events of the same day when the Egyptians again opened fire in a blatant violation of the cease-fire achieved only the previous day. It appeared, said the spokesman, that the Egyptians were resolutely determined not to allow the situation to calm down. The instructions to the IDF were not to open fire unless Egyptian fire was directed against them.[2]

Notes

1. In the wake of the incidents on the Gaza Strip border (see No. 181, n.1) the tension rose. On the morning of 5 April there were exchanges of fire along the border which developed into artillery barrages. The Egyptians shelled the kibbutzim along the line: Kissufim, En Hashlosha, Kefar Azza and Nahal Oz. In response Israel shelled positions in the Gaza Strip and also in Gaza City. The Egyptian losses, mainly in Gaza, were many and included 43 civilians. Through U.N. mediation a cease-fire was arranged (See B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, pp. 371-372).
2. On 6 April in the morning Burns contacted Tekoah and asked him to convey to the minister of defence a request that Israel stop the patrols along the border since they were "irresponsible and not far from a provocation." Ben-Gurion replied that he was prepared, exceptionally and in order to facilitate Hammarskjöld's mission, to

give such instructions temporarily on condition that Hammarskjöld received from Nasser an explicit and absolute promise that the Egyptian forces would stop opening fire against Israeli soldiers in Israeli territory, however close to the border they might be (See Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad, Circular 585, 6 April 1956, 130.02/2439/7).

185. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 6 April 1956

Coded Tel. 853; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Elath met with Selwyn Lloyd on the instructions of Sharett who asked him to raise once again the question of the supply of arms to Israel.[1]

Elath began by describing the situation in the Gaza Strip,[2] and stressed that Israel did not want war, but that in view of Nasser's provocations it had to be prepared for it and was confident that it could defend itself. If Nasser recognised Israel's strength he would think twice before undertaking an adventure. Therefore Israel was asking Britain to respond positively to its requests, and above all with regard to the Centurions.

Lloyd replied that he understood Israel's problem and was considering its requests. This morning, for instance, he had approved the sale of cannons for the torpedo boats, but the question of the Centurions was complicated. He was not worried about Nasser's reaction, but was concerned about Jordan's reaction.

Elath replied that the current struggle in Jordan had nothing to do with the issue of Palestine, but was a struggle between the supporters of Nasser who wished to turn it into an Egyptian satellite and those who wished to preserve its independence. In this connection any aid that Britain extended to Israel would weaken Nasser's supporters and strengthen his opponents, including those in Jordan. The benefit that Britain would derive from extending aid to Israel for itself and its supporters in Jordan and the rest of the Arab countries would counterbalance the damage that would perhaps be caused by the protest against this aid.

Lloyd replied that Elath's analysis was interesting, and he agreed with much of what he said concerning the situation in the region and about Nasser's part in undermining it. He could not give any answer concerning the Centurions before consulting with the prime minister. He noted that the planes that Britain had supplied were not the final word, and he would report on the conversation to Eden. As he saw Elath to the door he said that

that he was happy about the Mystères that Israel had received, and was aware that Israel was about to receive new planes from Canada. Britain, he said, supported both these deals.[6]

Notes

1. According to Sharett's directive, Elath was asked to request a meeting with Selwyn Lloyd and make the issue of the supply of British arms a central topic of the conversation (See the British Commonwealth Division to the ambassador in London, Tel. 626, 5 April 1956, 130.09/2232/1).
2. See No. 184.
3. In mid-March – See No. 149.
4. Colonel Radi Innab, Glubb's deputy, was appointed to replace him and was raised to the rank of major-general.
5. During the farewell to Lloyd at Lydda Airport, Sharett again raised the question of arms and asked whether Israel had any chance of receiving arms from the British. Lloyd replied: "In your place I wouldn't be pessimistic" (See Sharett to the Israel embassy in London, Tel. 583, 15 March 1956, 130.09/2321/1).
6. Sharett's response to this telegram: "An important conversation. You did very well in your arguments about Jordan. It is important to find out to whom the British Government expressed support for the purchase of planes from Canada" (See Sharett to Elath, Tel. 644, 9 April 1956, 130.13/2587/15).

186. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 7 April 1956

Coded Tel. 851; Outg: 130.09/2311/6

Summary

Sharett reports on his meeting with Lawson, at the latter's urgent request.[1] Lawson explained that he had contacted the minister at his initiative in order to receive information at first hand about the border incidents. Sharett explained the sequence of events, his appeal to Burns and the latter's request that Israel cease the patrols. Burns declared that this would not set a precedent, and that Israel's rights under the terms of the armistice agreements would not be affected. Now a reliable report from Cairo had arrived that instructions had been given to activate fedayeen in the neighbouring countries on a broad scale, and Israel assumes in light of experience that the reference was mainly to Jordan. Israel contacted Burns[2] and requested that he issue a stern warning to all the governments involved.

Notes

1. See Nos. 181, 184.
2. See Tekoah to Burns, 6 April 1956, 130.02/2440/7. Burns announced in reply that he had contacted Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. The Jordanian chief of staff assured him that that there were no signs that Egypt was planning to activate fedayeen from inside Jordanian territory and the Jordanian authorities would continue to do all in their power to ensure quiet on the border (See Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad, Circular 589, 6 April 1956, 130.02/2440/7).

187. S. Bendor (Paris) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 7 April 1956

Coded Tel. 616; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Bendor reports on his meeting with Pineau, who informed him that, after consultation with the prime minister, they had decided to postpone his visit to Israel on account of the situation and the latest incidents in the region.[1] Bendor asked until when the visit would be delayed, Pineau said it could take place at the end of May. When asked about the supply of arms he said that further decisions would be postponed until after the Three Power conference in three weeks time.[3] He hoped that the conference would decide to invite the Soviet Union for consultations with regard to the embargo on arms supplies to the Middle East. Bendor replied that first of all the forces had to be balanced. Pineau answered that this was clear, but France could not be the sole supplier of arms to the region as this would isolate it in Algeria as well. The United States and Britain must also supply. Bendor asked what the result would be if this did not happen. He replied: we shall continue to supply, we shall give something every month, perhaps not in the quantities that Israel wishes.

Notes

1. In a telegram from Bendor to Tsur and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (6 April 1956, 130.09/2346/5) it said that he had been informed at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that in a consultation between Prime Minister Mollet and his minister of foreign affairs it had been agreed to postpone Pineau's visit to Israel to a more convenient time, in view of the incidents in Gaza and the rising tension in the region.
2. Albert Gazier, the minister of social affairs in the French government.

3. The foreign ministers of the United States, Britain and France were due to meet in Paris on 6 May 1956, after the end of the NATO Conference, to discuss Middle East issues. See No. 242.

188. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 8 April 1956

Coded Tel. TNW379; Outg: 130.16/2951/15

Summary

Sharett conveys the text of a telegram which he had dispatched to the Israel mission to the U.N. with instructions to send immediately a letter to the Security Council concerning the incidents that had occurred during the night of 7/8 April.[1] The letter must stress that the upsurge in attacks had been inspired by the Egyptians who rejected any initiative for a cease-fire. The Egyptian high command was coordinating the operations of the murder and sabotage gangs in what was a clear-cut act of war directed at the civilian population. The Egyptian disregard for human life was expressed by the establishment of army outposts in the midst of the civilian population, and the responsibility for the civilian victims among the Egyptians lay with Egypt. The increased Egyptian aggression, just when the secretary-general is due to arrive in the region on a peace mission, arouses grave apprehensions concerning Egyptian intentions and the chances of preventing war in the Middle East.[2]

Notes

1. On this night there began a fedayeen attack instigated by the Egyptians. During the night four Israelis were killed in roadside ambushes close to the border, and ten were wounded. The fedayeen attacks continued on the following nights and ended only on 12 April. The climax of the offensive was the assault in Moshav Shafrir near to Ramle on the night of 11/12 April in which four pupils were killed whilst praying. The next day four Egyptian jet planes infiltrated into Israel territory. They were intercepted by the Israel Air Force and one of them was downed and its pilot taken prisoner. For details of the events between 10/12 April see the letter of Liveran, the acting Israeli permanent representative to the president of the Security Council, 12 April 1956, U.N. Document S/3585.
2. The Israeli letter was published as a press release by the U.N. Information Department (See Text of Israeli Letter to the Security Council, 10 April 1956, in File 130.16/2951/10).

   On the day the telegram above was sent Burns was received by Ben-Gurion. Burns informed him that he had sent a letter of protest to Nasser. According to him, all the

evidence indicated that Egypt had given instructions for the fedayeen offensive and could therefore be considered an aggressor. He added that he hoped that in spite of this Israel would not undertake a reprisal operation against Egypt. Ben-Gurion asked when he expected a reply to his letter. Burns replied that he hoped to receive it the next day. Ben-Gurion said that he was prepared to wait until the day after, but if no firm undertaking was received from Egypt that it would avoid all hostile acts, Israel would reserve the right to freedom of action (See Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad, 8 April 1956, 130.02/2439/7).

189. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 8 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA110; Outg: 93.01/2212/14

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Allen. They began with a report on the incidents on the Egyptian border.[1] Allen said that it was possible that Nasser was calculating that Israel would receive arms in the coming weeks and therefore the opportune moment for tackling Israel must be exploited. Eban agreed this was a possibility and added that it strengthened Israel's case for demanding arms.

They proceeded to discuss arms. Allen reported that the Canadian ambassador had been invited to the State Department, and it had been officially explained to him that the State Department hoped that the Canadians would respond positively to Israel's request for the sale of arms.[3] Allen hoped that the Canadian matter would work out. Eban mentioned the news reports from Rome[4] and Allen reported on an approach from Italy in the form of remarks of the Italian representative to Shiloah.[5] Allen summed up by saying that the episode of misunderstandings that had occurred with France over arrangements for the Mystères was being repeated. He concluded by saying that he would invite the Italian ambassador and instruct him how to act to obtain American approval for the sale.[6]

Notes

1. See No. 188.
2. See No. 186.
3. See No. 166.
4. See No. 165, n. 9.
5. The Italian representative said that Italy had contacted the Americans on two matters: the F-86 planes and the Sherman tanks. With regard to the planes the Americans argue that selling them amounts to the United States itself selling the planes since

in fact the plane is not manufactured in Italy and only assembled there from parts imported from the United States. As for the Shermans, the Italians are making their release conditional on receiving new tanks from the United States and the United States Government is not at the moment prepared to do so (See Israel embassy in Washington to Sharett, Tel. 123, 10 April 1956, 130.09/2311/8).

6. In a telegram in reply Sharett said that: a. Sasson in Rome is being urged to initiate an official approach which apparently had not yet been made, but if the embassy could get the United States to approach Italy directly, all the better. b. As regards Canada they must be in touch with Comay; c. It was desirable to do everything to obtain the second dozen French planes as soon as possible; d. They must do everything possible to speed up procurement in the United States. The Americans must be reminded and made ashamed that so far Israel had heard nothing. In conclusion he said: "There is a growing tendency in favour of an approach to the other side" (the Soviet bloc) (See Sharett to the embassy in Washington, IWA861, 8 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
7. See No. 178

190. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 8 April 1956

Coded Tel. WA859; Outg: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Sharett responds to Eban's telegram.[1] He is not at all certain that Dulles is working according to a plan, and even less – that he was assigning Israel any positive role in it. Whether such a plan existed or not, defence requirements took priority over economic development requirements. As regards defence, Israel no longer had any faith in the United States, and only deeds would restore it. The demand for arms remained unchanged and they were also being called upon to obtain planes for Israel from Canada and Italy. The issue of the grant-in-aid and the resumption of work on the Jordan river channel were a quite separate matter. Israel would wait for the proposal that Johnston had promised. There was no open rift between Israel and the Americans; on the contrary, Israel had exercised restraint in public statements, as had been stressed to Lawson.

Notes

1. See No. 174.
2. See Nos. 155, 156.
3. No. 165.
4. See No. 178.
5. Eban's telegram to the United States division in which he reported on a meeting with Murphy. Murphy advised contacting Ottawa, Paris and Rome immediately with

regard to the arms, and if there were difficulties, to inform the secretary of state. He advised them not to relax the pressure on the administration, but warned not to create an atmosphere of open hostility, particularly in government statements (Tel. WIA98, 5 April 1956, 93.01/2212/14).

191. President Eisenhower (Washington) to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion. 10 April 1956

Notes

1. This message was delivered to Ben-Gurion on 10 April by the United States Ambassador Lawson.
2. On the occasion of Hammarskjöld's departure for the Middle East a statement was issued on 9 April in President Eisenhower's name which said among other things that it was the United States' intention to oppose, in accordance with its responsibility under the U.N. Charter and within the limits of the means allowed under the American constitution, any aggression in the region and to support any state which fell victim to such aggression.
3. Ben-Gurion's reply – See No. 192.
   In a speech in the Knesset on 22 April, in the context of a debate on the security situation, Ben-Gurion alluded to the Eisenhower message and said among other things: "Obviously, one cannot take lightly the promise of the White House to help and assist a nation that is liable to be attacked. The one state in the Middle East that expects such a danger is Israel, and if American assistance is not forthcoming in time – and till now it has not been – the goodwill contained in this declaration is liable to miss the decisive moment and come to nothing. What we expect from the United States ... is not the dispatch of an army against the attacker after he wages war against us, but the supply of defensive arms to Israel which will deter and prevent the attack (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 1685).

192. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to President Eisenhower (Washington). 10 April 1956

Notes

1. No. 191.
2. See No. 56.

193. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 10 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA122; Outg: 93.01/2212/14

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Allen.[1] Eban sought to clarify the contradictions between the remarks made to the Israeli ambassador in Rome and what had been said in the State Department regarding the purchase of planes in Italy. Allen explained that the United States embassy in Rome had not been briefed and he would be informing it about the latest developments. Essentially, he pointed out that there was a difference between the purchase of planes in Italy, where they were in actual fact American planes, and the purchase in Canada and France. In spite of this he advised against halting the negotiations in Italy, but pointed out that it would be better to buy weapons such as bazookas and anti-tank guns there.[2] Eban asked if he was prepared to announce to the French on his initiative that if they wished and were able to accelerate the supply of the second dozen Mystères by offshore procurement, the United States would be prepared to give the necessary approval. He replied that he was positively inclined and would answer within 24 hours. Eban also asked if there had been progress in examining the list that Israel had presented for purchasing in the United States.[4] He replied that the matter "had not been pigeon-holed," but in the meantime he had nothing to report. Eban answered that this meant that no progress had been made.[5]

Notes

1. Sharett instructed Eban to meet urgently with Allen in order to explain the contradiction between his remarks concerning Israeli procurement in Italy (see No.189) and those conveyed to Ambassador Sasson in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to No. 165, n. 9 (See Sharett to Eban, Tel. 868, 9 April 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
2. In reply on this matter Sharett replied: "Don't supply us with Italian cannons and bazookas, since in any case we receive in Rome almost everything we ask for and which does not require American approval". (See Sharett to Eban, 12 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
3. Sharett recommended asking once again "if they have anything to report to us" (See Sharett to the embassy in Washington, Tel. 861, 8 April 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
4. See No. 165, n. 12 (the conversation actually took place on 29 March).
5. In a supplementary telegram (Eban to Tsur, WITA8, 10 April 1956, 93.01/2212/4) Eban wrote that he had heard from Allen that instructions would be going out to the United States embassy in France to inform the French government that if it wished to supply Israel with the second dozen (Mystères) at the expense of the NATO quota

in order to speed up the shipment, the United States would view this decision with favour, and would grant the requested permit.

Eban also talked with Murphy about this affair. Murphy noted that he had argued with the secretary of state on the need for a direct sale and he hoped that it made an impression on him and brought him nearer to making a positive decision. In any event he would try to speed up matters in the next few days (See Eban to Sharett, Tel. WIA127, 11 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).

6. See No. 194.

194. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 10 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA126; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Heeney about the sale of Canadian planes to Israel. He said that Canada was receiving much good advice from the United States and Britain in this regard, but in fact all the responsibility lay with them. The Americans were too optimistic if they thought that Canada could carry out the deal without the Americans making some positive public statement and without them supplying any of the items Israel requests. In his view the internal difficulties in Canada were considerable since they had never been involved in such a large deal.

Eban consulted with Comay. The latter argued that Heeney was not right regarding the demand for a public American statement, and such a statement might even be a hindrance, since Canada would look as if it was doing America's bidding. On the other hand, a positive American response to Israel concerning some item was vital.

Eban notes that he had promised Heeney to do everything to advance the American position beyond what it was at present.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 166.
2. Sharett's response to Eban: "Re your [telegram] 126. Do you or Comay know with which item on our list to the United States Canada will be satisfied?" (See telegram of 12 April 1956, in File 130.02/2456/1).

195. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 11 April 1956

Coded Tel. 93.01/2213/10; Outg: WIA131

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with the secretary of state. Dulles began by saying that he had cancelled his vacation on account of the tension in the Middle East and it was advisable to keep in close contact. He asked Eban for an assessment of the situation.

Eban described the situation. He said that that the current crisis might pass, but only the supply of arms could bring about a fundamental amelioration. He said that Israel had been disappointed by the last conversation with him.[2] It had accepted his recommendation to look for arms in other places, but the lack of direct American action was making it difficult for these states to decide.

Dulles interrupted Eban four times during the conversation:

1. He asked if the fedayeen were equipped with radios. Eban replied that possibly not but there was no doubt that the decision to send them had come from Nasser.
2. He said that a message had been sent to Paris regarding the speeding up of the supply of Mystères, and copies were sent to Ottawa and Rome.
3. He asked if Israel had pilots for the F-86, and how long it would take to train them. He asked for a quick reply.
4. He recalled that the British had released four planes. Eban replied that this aid was limited.

After Eban's remarks Dulles said:

a. He appreciated Israel's restraint. The United States was making efforts with the support of the U.N. secretary-general to calm the situation.
b. He agreed that calming the situation would not resolve the main problem. The big danger was in mid-summer. Therefore the United States wanted Israel to receive the equipment by then.
c. He analysed United States policy in the Middle East as aiming at preserving its status there and also at assuring Europe's standing. Therefore he preferred Israel's arms problem to be resolved without direct United States involvement. If it turned out that this goal could not be achieved without additional American action they would determine what to do.
d. He reiterated his appreciation for Israel's restraint.
e. He again requested information about the training of pilots for the F-86.
f. He said that it had been decided to correct the impression that had been given to the Italians. Although he was aware that Italy was not a source for planes, perhaps the intervention might help Israel with other items.

After the conversation Allen added: a. A more forceful circular would be sent to the legations in Ottawa, Paris, London and Rome.[4] b. The State Department had the impression that the Pentagon had not properly grasped the secretary's policy and it had been decided to summon the person responsible for this to receive clarifications, in order to break the deadlock over previous and regular Israeli requests. d. Allen asked to be informed about any development or hitch affecting Israel in the other capitals.[6]

Notes

1. In this telegram Eban reported that after his conversations with Allen (No. 193) and Murphy (ibid. n. 5) the two had suggested raising the subject with Dulles. Allen arranged a secret meeting for Eban, on which he reports in the document above.
2. See No. 165 (in fact the remarks were made on 28 March).
3. See No. 178.
4. In a separate conversation with Allen two days later he reported that instructions had in fact been conveyed to the United States embassies in these states (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WIA138, 13 April 1956, 93.01/2214/14).
5. Gordon Grey, the assistant secretary of defense for international security, who dealt with Israel's arms requests in the Pentagon.
6. Sharett sent Eban "interim comments" (see his telegram No. 888, 12 April 1956, in File 130.09/2311/6); "A. The second sentence in paragraph b. and the penultimate in paragraph f. indicate progress, that is, if the personal interpretation is correct, but the loss of time is 'maddening'... B. As to paragraph 4, they must be told straight away with the help of Comay that without a real contribution from the United States we shall not make progress in Canada. C. As for f. the situation is that we are receiving without their assistance everything that we require and which does not need permits. D. What do you think he intends by his recurrent question in paragraphs 3 and e, is it only to justify a further delay?"

196. E. Sasson (Rome) to W. Eytan. 11 April 1956

Coded Tel. 219; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Sasson reports on a conversation with Cattani at the Italian Foreign Ministry. He conveyed to him the explanations that Eban had received in Washington from Allen[2] and expressed astonishment at the contradictions concerning the State Department's approach to Italy with regard to the supply of arms to Israel.[3] Cattani replied to the contradictions, but the main thrust of his reply was that Italy had not yet decided if such a deal with Israel was desirable and preferred to see what the United States position would be, since it was in effect the main source of the planes and tanks. Cattani was happy to hear

that Allen intended to summon the Italian ambassador for a talk. Sasson suggests cabling to Eban the content of his telegram and suggesting to him that he should contact the Italian ambassador.[4]

Notes

1. The telegram contained the gist of No. 189.
2. See No. 189.
3. See No. 165, n. 9.
4. Eban met with the Italian ambassador in Washington on 23 April and heard from him that it was difficult for Italy to sell Israel Sherman tanks without receiving other tanks in exchange for them, otherwise it would fail in its commitments to NATO. The ambassador added that he had heard from Allen that the United States preferred Israel to buy planes in France and Canada, but if the Israelis did not succeed it was possible that the Americans would speak with the Italians. The ambassador felt that there was no point in exerting pressure until Israel's chances in Canada were cleared up (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 170, 23 April 1956, 130.09/2311/8).

197. A. Eban [Washington] to the U.S. Secretary of State (Washington). 12 April 1956

Notes

1. See No. 195.
2. See No. 188 and n. 1 there.

198. E. Elath (London) to M. Sharett. 12 April 1956

Coded Tel. 885; Inc.: 130.02/2456/11

Summary

Elath refers to the exchange of telegrams between Sharett and the embassy in London concerning Britain's position on the supply of arms to Israel.[1] In spite of Selwyn Lloyd's explicit remarks on their support for Israel's approach to Canada, there were hints in the British Foreign Office that this should not be seen as a precedent for a regular and routine approach to the Canadians with regard to arms. This was due in his opinion to Britain's fear of losing favour with the Arab states, and particularly just now during the Teheran conference.[3] It should be remembered that even if there were indications of an improvement in Britain's attitude towards Israel,

this was due to concerns about Nasser, and they must not exaggerate the significance of the change before Israel was convinced that a fundamental change had taken place and a new policy was being evolved towards Israel. Consequently, he recommended continuing to demand arms from Britain, especially the Centurion tanks.

Notes

1. In this telegram (Sharett to Elath, 9 April 1956, 130.09/2456/1) Sharett responded to Elath's report on his conversation with Selwyn Lloyd on 6 April (No. 185), in which was mentioned among other things that the British foreign minister had expressed his government's support for the sale of Canadian planes to Israel.
2. In response to Sharett's telegram, Gazit held a conversation in the Foreign Office with Hadow, the deputy head of the Levant Department, who confirmed that Lloyd's attitude to Israel's request to purchase planes on Canada was positive but did not know of any official contact between Britain and Canada on this subject in London. If there had been such a contact, it was at the ministerial level or through the British Commonwealth Office. Canada, he added, was not a signatory of the Tripartite Agreement and therefore the limitations applying under this agreement did not affect it (See Gazit to the British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 884, 12 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
3. The Baghdad Pact Council convened in Teheran between 16-19 April.
4. Jules Moch, the French representative at the Disarmament Conference which convened in London at the beginning of April 1956, told Elath that he had gained the impression that there were differences of opinion between Eden and Selwyn Lloyd regarding British Middle East policy. Lloyd believed that Nasser represented a great danger to Britain and must be fought, whereas Eden wished to avoid a rift with Nasser and was prepared to make concessions (See Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 873, 10 April 1956, 130.09/2321/2).

199. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 15 April 1956

Copy: 130.16/2951/15

Summary

Tekoah refers to the 4 April Security Council resolution for easing tension in the region.[1] This resolution mentions three previous Council resolutions containing various proposals of General Burns for preserving quiet on the Gaza Strip border,[2,4,5] and also the resolution of the Council regarding Lake Tiberias.[6] He reviews Israel's attitude to these proposals, which was generally positive. His overall conclusion was that these proposals could not solve the problem, and a few of them had already been tried and failed.

Notes

1. See No.179. This appendix and all the appendices referred to below were not printed here.
2. This resolution was adopted in the wake of Israel's action in Gaza in February 1955, and called on Israel and Egypt to cooperate with the chief of staff of U.N.T.S.O. to implement steps to preserve the cease fire (U.N. Document S/3379).
3. Refers to meetings led by General Burns held at Kilometre 95 along the Gaza Strip border, between representatives of Egypt and Israel, to discuss proposals raised to reduce tension on the border. As detailed in the beginning of the document above, agreement was reached on a number of points but the Egyptians rejected the Israeli proposal to establish telephone contact between the commanders. Altogether there were ten meetings between 29 June and 9 August 1955. On 24 August Egypt informed Burns of its decision to stop the meetings.
4. This resolution was adopted after the suspension of the talks in Gaza and the resumption of hostile acts along the border of the Gaza Strip. It called on the sides to cooperate with the chief of staff of UNTSO to preserve the cease fire (U.N. Document S/3435).
5. See No. 179 (Editorial Note).
6. See No. 29 (Editorial Note).

200. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 15 April 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/3

Summary

Rafael gives some guidelines for the conduct of the forthcoming talks with the secretary-general.

The secretary-general is coming on a mission according to the explicit instructions of the Security Council resolution of 4 April 1956 and on the basis of the wide-ranging powers granted to him under the United Nations Charter. This resolution mentions the four armistice agreements as well as the three resolutions of the Security Council.[2] The aim is to obtain from the sides a confirmation of the measures that are likely to bring about reduction in the tension along the armistice lines. There is also the possibility that the secretary-general will wish to study the fundamental problems in dispute, such as refugees, Jerusalem, borders, but it may be assumed that there will only be a general exchange of views on these topics, because of the refusal of the Arabs to enter direct negotiations.

During the negotiations with the sides he will almost certainly focus on three matters: the cessation of acts of hostility along the border; the reinforcing of the U.N. personnel; and stabilising the situation in the

Nitzana region. All of these are temporary and partial measures which do not answer the central question, which is the aggressive attitude of the Arab states, expressed by arming themselves and fomenting incitement. These measures, without a change of policy on the part of the Arab states, are liable even to help the Arabs to prepare themselves for war by preventing interruptions and hindrances. In view of this, it is suggested that the Israeli representatives should not be satisfied with a discussion of these technical measures but should request that proposals be studied for an overall cessation of all acts of hostility, transition to a permanent peace, respect for the armistice lines and cooperation between the sides for resolving incidents. To this end it might be necessary to present an Israeli plan for avoiding war according to these principles.

Should the talks nevertheless be confined to technical measures, Israel must insist on complete cessation of acts of hostility, the pullback of the forces from the defensive regions, increased cooperation between the sides and faithful implementation of the armistice agreements. In any future negotiations, direct discussions with the Arab side must be ensured, especially in all those cases in which a serious deviation from the existing armistice agreements has occurred.

Notes

1. The first paragraph, dealing with procedural matters, was not printed here.
2. See No. 199.
3. This article says among other things that "no elements of land, sea or air military or para-military forces of either Party ... shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other Party, or against civilians in the area under the control of that Party (See Vol. 3, Appendix F, p. 689).
4. See No. 146.
5. It grants the right to the parties signatory to the armistice agreement to request the secretary-general to convene a conference of representatives of the sides in order to review, amend or cancel any condition of the armistice agreement, with the exception of the basic articles, I and II.
6. This article deals with the establishment of a special committee made up of the representatives of Jordan and Israel to make arrangements for the resumption of the work of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus, for ensuring free access to the Holy Places, use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives, resumption of the work of the pumping station in Latrun, resumption of travel on the railway line to Jerusalem and freedom of movement on vital routes (See Vol. 3, Appendix H, p. 717).

201. J. Herzog (Jerusalem) to A. Eban and R. Shiloah. 15 April 1956

Coded Tel. WA897; Outg: 130.09/2311/6

Summary

Herzog reports on a conversation between Lawson and Ben-Gurion. Lawson stated that he had been instructed by the secretary of state to announce that telegrams had been sent to the United States embassies in Ottawa, Paris and Rome, saying that the circumstances preventing the sale of American arms to Israel need not hold up the sales from these capitals. Ben-Gurion replied that so long as there was no positive response from the United States, even if only a symbolic one, others would hesitate to sell. Lawson replied that the United States did not have the status of a traditional arms supplier to the region. Ben-Gurion reminded him of the supply of arms to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Notes

1. In this telegram (Shiloah to Herzog, 13 April, 130.02/2456/1) it says that Lawson had received instructions from the State Department to inform Israel about details of the increased United States activity in the various capitals to speed up Israel's procurement efforts.
2. See No. 195.
3. See No. 193 and n. 5 there.

202. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 16 April 1956

Coded Tel. 670; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Tsur reports on his conversation with Mollet at which Peres was also present. They first handed him the prime minister's letter,[1] and he said that he agreed with everything in it and his heart was with Israel. He said that there was no need to convince France of Nasser's duplicity and the danger he represented to the peace of the Middle East and the world. They were trying to instill this conclusion into the hearts of the English and the Americans. Tsur and Peres then broached the arms issue. They asked for another 12 Mystères,

Ouragans and an increased number of AMX13-type tanks. He said that France would do all in its power, but unfortunately only what was in its power.[7]

Notes

1. The letter, dated 12 April 1956, in the Ben-Gurion archive. In the letter Ben-Gurion asked Mollet to assist Tsur and Peres in their efforts to obtain arms from France.
2. See No. 165.
3. Perhaps he wished to say an increased number of AMX13 tanks.
4. See No. 187 and n. 3. there.
5. Mollet and Pineau visited the Soviet Union between 15-20 May, 1956. No documentation was found on a meeting of Tsur with Mollet before the journey, and apparently it did not take place; Tsur was content with a meeting with Pineau, see No. 242.
6. The visit did not take place, see No. 187.
7. In another telegram Tsur reported that Mollet warned him and Peres about direct contact with Bourgès-Maunoury, the minister of defence. The decisions regarding arms, he added, would be taken by himself and by Pineau and would be carried out by the Ministry of Defence (See Tsur to the West European Division and the Ministry of Defence, Tel. 675, 17 April 1956, IMDEA, 230/72/779).

203. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 17 April 1956

Coded Tel. 901; Outg: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

The division reports on the minister's meeting with the United States Ambassador Lawson. Lawson brought a summation of the United States position regarding the sale of arms, and described it as his impression of the position of the State Department. For the message in full, see the Main Volume.

The minister said that the message was disappointing. Israel's inquiries in Canada and France had shown that these countries would not respond positively without direct consent from the United States. Pineau said explicitly that France would be ready to give 75 percent of the arms, if other states would supply the remainder.[3] In the United States statement there were also contradictions that were difficult to reconcile, for example that of its not wishing to upset the arms balance for fear of an arms race. He was urgently requesting the United States to cut the Gordian knot, by direct supply from the United States to Israel, for example of F-84 patrol planes

which were not essentially aggressive weapons, the supply of which could serve as an excuse for Canada to supply F-86 planes.

The ambassador mumbled his support for the minister's request. He commented that perhaps the United States wanted the French or the Canadians to take the first step. To this the minister replied that the French had already done so.

Notes

1. No. 201.
2. See No. 195.
3. See No. 187.

204. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 18 April 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 648; Outg: 130.09/2339/6

Summary

Rafael reports on the meetings with Hammarskjöld. In the first official session the implementation of the armistice agreement was discussed. The prime minister insisted upon a faithful implementation of all the articles in the agreement, and especially the principles in Article I,[1] and said that as long as Egypt disavowed this article there could be no improvement in the situation. Hammarskjöld agreed that the Egyptian stand on this matter represented an obstacle, but suggested concentrating on the substantive articles, particularly Article II 2[2] which talked about the cessation of acts of hostility. The prime minister agreed to repeat in writing the existing orders to the I.D.F. to avoid firing across the border and crossing the line, and on 18 April at 18.00 the secretary-general would issue an announcement by the two sides of their agreement to observe a total cease-fire in accordance with Article II 2.

The secretary-general also asked Israel if during the trial period it could keep its patrols away from the border, not as foregoing its rights but as a contribution to the reduction in violence. The prime minister agreed that Israel would only enforce its rights in accordance with security requirements on the border, and if there were no infiltration and quiet prevailed, there would be no need for permanent patrols. The secretary-general was grateful for this.

The secretary-general then said that he wished to discuss the implementation of Articles VII, VIII, and X,[4] and his demand that the observers be granted freedom of movement not only for holding investigations after the fact but to detect violations before [sic] they occurred. The prime minister explained Israel's fundamental opposition to granting U.N. personnel increased authority.

The atmosphere in the talks was businesslike and friendly.

Notes

1. This article in the armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt states that "The injunction of the Security Council against resort to military force in the settlement of the Palestine question shall henceforth be scrupulously respected by both Parties, no aggressive action by the armed forces ... of either Party shall be undertaken, planned or threatened against the people or the armed forces of the other ... the establishment of an armistice between the armed forces of the two Parties is accepted as an indispensable step toward the liquidation of armed conflict and the restoration of peace in Palestine" (See Vol. 3, Appendix F, pp. 688-689).
2. See No. 200, n. 2.
3. See No. 11, n. 6.
4. This article deals with the setting up of a Mixed Armistice Commission to supervise the armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt. Clause 10 states that the members of the commission shall be accorded such freedom of movement and access in the areas that are covered by the agreement as the Commission may determine to be necessary provided that when such decisions of the Commission are reached by a majority vote United Nations Observers only shall be employed (See Vol. 3, Appendix 6, pp. 694-696).
5. At the meeting Hammarskjöld suggested expanding the activity of the observers, Ben-Gurion promised to consider it. For his part Ben-Gurion contended that Egypt was violating the commitments it had taken upon itself in the armistice agreement, and demanded that it should once again affirm its adherence to those commitments, and cease from actions in contradiction to them, and above all the blockade of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. Hammarsjköld replied that these demands exceeded the bounds of the assignment with which the Security Council had charged him, and added that no Arab government would dare to publicly renounce the existence of a state of war with Israel. He expressed hope that it might be possible to get Nasser to cease the blockade without having to make a public declaration about this (See Rafael to the Israel Missions Abroad, TNW394, 19 April 1956, 130.02/2448/3).
6. There were two further meetings with Hammarskjöld, on 19 and 29 April. For a summary of the four meetings see the bulletin "In the Armistice Commission and on the Israel borders," No. 173, 23 April 1956, 130.02/2404/4. In this file there is also a stenographic record of the session on 19 April.

205. Editorial Note

The Declaration by the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Situation in the Middle East

On 17 April 1956 the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on the situation in the Middle East. Below are its salient points:

The situation developing in the Middle East arouses concern among all the circles interested in strengthening world peace. The main cause of the deterioration in the situation in this region is the continuous attempt to create and extend military alignments which endanger the independence of the peoples in the area and the security of peace-loving countries. This process is causing a deterioration of relations between the Arab states and Israel. Certain circles in countries that are not interested in promoting international peace seek to exploit the Arab-Israeli conflict for aggressive aims and to introduce foreign troops into the territories of countries of the area, thereby creating military complications. The Soviet Union supports the efforts of the Middle Eastern countries to consolidate their independence and strengthen their economies. The government of the Soviet Union believes that it is possible and vital to prevent an armed conflict in the Middle East, and that it is the interest of all the states of the region not to allow themselves to be dragged into entanglement in military operations. The government of the Soviet Union considers it illegal and inadmissable from the standpoint of the support for overall peace to exploit the Arab-Israel conflict as a pretext for outside interference in the internal affairs of independent Arab states or for introducing foreign troops into the Middle East.

In light of the said situation the Government of the Soviet Union declares:

1. The Soviet Union will offer the necessary support to U.N. measures directed towards ways and means of strengthening peace in the area of Palestine and implementing the corresponding decisions of the Security Council.

2. The Soviet Union believes that measures should be taken at the earliest moment to ease the tension in the Palestine area without outside interference which is contrary to the will of the Near Eastern countries and U.N. principles.

The Soviet Union calls on the interested parties to avoid all actions that might lead to exacerbation of the situation on the existing demarcation lines that were fixed in the armistice agreements between the Arab states and Israel, and also to make the necessary efforts to alleviate the difficult position of hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees deprived of their homes and means of subsistence.

3. The Soviet Union believes that in order to strengthen international peace and security this subject must be dealt with in such a way that it will bring about a lasting solution of the Palestine question, on a mutually acceptable basis, taking due consideration for the just national interests of the interested parties.

For its part, the Soviet Union expresses willingness to help, together with other countries, to find a peaceful solution to problems that have not yet been resolved.

(See the text translated from Russian in the telegram from the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 April 1956, 130.02/2457/15.)

206. Israel Ambassador in Moscow to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 18 April 1956

Coded Tel. 99; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

The ambassador tries to understand what lies behind the statement by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[1] In his opinion, the statement reflects a very real concern about war between Israel and the Arab states and the entry of Western armed forces in its wake. The intention was to prevent such a war as well as to attempt to gain a foothold in the region as an element helping to settle the conflict. The statement might possibly be related also to the forthcoming visit of the Soviet leaders to Britain[2] and the recent increase in tension. There might possibly be some easing in the hard-line stance towards Israel. He suggests asking for a meeting with the deputy minister of foreign affairs[3] in order to express positive appreciation for their call to avoid acts of hostility, to stress that the supply of arms to Egypt and other Arab states was incompatible with the stand they had adopted in their statement, and to ask for clarification whether the Soviet Union supported the implementation of all the Security Council resolutions, including the one referring to freedom of navigation. In any event, he suggests issuing a reply that would be largely positive but which would highlight the contradiction between the supply of arms and the demand for peace.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).

2. The Soviet prime minister, Nikolai Bulganin, and the first secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, were due to visit Britain from 17 to 27 April – See No. 225.
3. See No. 223.
4. See Nos. 209 and 214.

207. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett and the West European Division. 18 April 1956

Coded Tel. 679; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Tsur cables on his conversation with Pineau. He found him reserved and agitated because of the pressure exerted on him by the friends of Israel regarding arms, in particular his socialist friends. They do not understand his situation and accuse him of neglecting Israel, when in fact he was doing his best. He said that he would not agree to sign a contract for the 12 Mystères until 5 June, the date of the consultation with the British and the Americans, but they were being kept for Israel. He vigorously maintained that he could not endanger France's position in the Arab world and be the sole supplier of arms to Israel. He promised to get things moving after the June meeting. Tsur's impression was that Pineau, who was influenced by his advisers and had also been strongly attacked for having cancelled his visit to Israel,[3] was being stubborn in order to justify his reserved stance.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 187, n. 3.
2. See No. 205.
3. See No. 187.
4. See No. 216. In a further conversation with Massigli on 18 April the latter confirmed that Pineau had given an instruction to stop any supply until 5 June. His intention was to exert strong pressure on the United States in order that it should also take responsibility for the supply of arms. He pointed out that there were two limitations with regard to France's desire to speed up aid to Israel: coordination with its allies and the desire not to overly anger the Arabs, even though they had despaired of appeasing them (See Tsur to the West European Division, Tel. 686, 18 April 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

208. Z. Doriel (Teheran) to D. Lewin. 18 April 1956

Copy: 130.15/2565/24

Summary

Doriel presents a survey of Israel's standing in Iran,[1] its contacts and activities in that country and the elements favouring or hampering the strengthening of ties, and makes some suggestions for action.

Israel must act in a restrained and quiet manner and confine itself to the development of cultural and trade relations and trying to get a favourable press. Israel should foster contacts in the sphere of oil, in which Israel has an advantage as the only state in the region that can be a permanent market for Iranian oil, and the only one just now which pays for the oil in cash. In the political sphere it must exploit the Iranian desire to appear as possessing an independent policy, its fear of Egypt and other Arab states, the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the other states over the issue of Bahrein,[5] and the fear of the Sunni Arabs taking control of the region. Israel should foster relations with the Shah, who is the supreme authority in all things. Every action it undertakes in Iran must take into account that this state will not take any decisive step without first consulting with Britain or the United States. Consequently, the groundwork must be laid in these countries as well.[11]

Notes

1. Doriel was appointed as Israel's unofficial representative of Israel in Iran at the beginning of 1956, see No. 27, note 10. The document is given here with abbreviations, stylistic corrections and editing by the minister of foreign affairs at the time.
2. Mullah Ayatullah Abu al-Kassem Kashani, an Iranian religious and political leader. In 1948 he organised anti-Israel demonstrations in Teheran, and called for the recruitment of volunteers to assist the Arabs in their war against Israel. He retired from political life in 1953.
3. On 13-19 April the second annual conference of the Baghdad Pact Council took place in Teheran.
4. In August 1954 an agreement was reached which put an end to the dispute between Britain and Iran following the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. Under the agreement an international consortium, comprising a number of companies, was set up to run the Iranian oil economy, and there was also set up the National Iranian Oil Company, to which was allotted a production quota of 12.5% of the consortium's overall quota.
5. A group of islands in the Persian Gulf. In 1602-1786 they were under Iranian sovereignty, and from 1861 under British protection. Iran claimed sovereignty over

Bahrein, but its claims were rejected by Britain and the Arab states. In 1957 the Iranian parliament adopted a law defining Bahrein as the 14th province of Iran.

6. The Soviet Union presented three letters of protest to Iran concerning its joining the Baghdad Pact: on 16 October 1955, on 26 November 1955 and on 25 February 1956. These protests were rejected by Iran.
7. The Shah of Iran visited the Soviet Union between 25 June and 12 July 1956.
8. The Iranian Communist party. It was outlawed in 1949 but its leaders continued to be active in exile, mainly in Eastern Europe.
9. The rest of the paragraph, and several other paragraphs relating to arrangements connected with the establishing of the Israel representation, and the fostering of relations with Iran, were omitted by the editors.
10. The second part of the sentence, dealing with relations with a certain journalist, was omitted by the editors.
11. In an opinion on Doriel's proposals which the Asia Division submitted to the minister of foreign affairs it said among other things: "We all have a strong desire to advance relations with Persia and to facilitate Dr. Doriel's work in various spheres, but we would not be frank if we hid our well-founded fear that his tendency to precipitate matters could lead to ill-considered acts" (See Ben-Horin to Neeman, 6 June 1956, 130.02/2410/11).

209. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 19 April 1956[1]

Coded Tel.; Outg: 130.02/2457/15

Summary

The division gives an initial briefing on the 17 April Soviet Foreign Ministry statement.[2]

1. The statement was issued just prior to the visit of Bulganin and Khrushchev to London,[3] and that of Mollet and Pineau to Moscow.[4] Its purpose was to establish at the outset the Soviet Union's status as a party to any temporary or permanent settlement of the Middle East problem.

2. It appeared that the Soviet Union had come to the conclusion that it must review its unreserved support for the Arabs and it was possible that it recognised the difficulties caused by the arms deal.

3. In view of the fact that Molotov reasoned that this statement could serve as a basis for talks with Eden, the question to be asked was what would the Soviet Union's Middle East policy be if the talks in London failed.

4. The statement contained several new and positive expressions towards Israel, such as a somewhat more balanced approach towards Israel and the Arabs, the reference to the armistice lines and non-reliance on the partition lines, and approval for a peace settlement agreed to by both sides.

5. On the other hand, it contains negative aspects (lack of support for maintaining the equilibrium, for example) and it is not clear from it what settlement is acceptable to the Soviet Union.
6. Therefore it is too early to say whether the statement represents an about-turn in the Soviet Union's attitude towards Israel.
7. In talks they must accentuate the positive sides, avoid making final judgments so long as the Soviet Union has not clarified its intentions, and point out that the statement represents a degree of improvement on the earlier line but that there is also a clear tendency to see the Arab states as the essential and the positive element and Israel as no more than a tolerated entity.[8]

Notes

1. Sent to Washington, London, Paris, Moscow and Rome.
2. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).
3. Bulganin and Khrushchev were due to visit Britain from 17 to 27 April 1956 – See No. 225.
4. Between 15-19 May 1956.
5. In July 1955 there took place in Geneva a summit conference of the leaders of the three Western Powers and the Soviet Union. The conference dealt with the reunification of Germany, European security, disarmament and East-West relations. It was decided to charge the four foreign ministers of these states with the task of continuing with the discussions. They convened in Geneva in October-November 1955 but did not reach agreement on the aforementioned issues.
6. The Bandung conference convened in that city in Indonesia in April 1955. 29 African and Asian states participated and it was attended by the most prominent leaders from the Afro-Asian bloc – Nehru, Chou En Lai, Sukarno, U Nu, Nkrumah and others. Israel was not invited. The conference affirmed five principles to guide the participant states: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and the sovereignty of all the states; non-aggression; non-intervention in the internal affairs of the other states; "equality and mutual benefit"; and peaceful coexistence. The conference called for economic and cultural cooperation and declared its support for the principles of human rights and self-determination, the abolition of colonialism and for world peace. On the Palestine question the conference adopted the following resolution: "In view of the existing tension in the Middle East caused by the situation in Palestine, and the danger of that tension to world peace, the conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the UN resolutions on Palestine and for the peaceful settlement of the Palestine problem."
7. See. No. 176.
8. The Israel embassy in Moscow reached similar conclusions regarding the Soviet announcement. In conversations with diplomats in Moscow (the ambassadors of France and Turkey and the Swedish counsellor) the Israelis were told that the announcement constituted a turning point for the better and an important achievement for Israel (See Israel embassy in Moscow to the East European Division, Tel. 100, 19 April 1956, 130.11/2505/24).

210. E. Elath (London) to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 20 April 1956

Notes

1. Compare this list with the summary of purchases from Britain of 13 March 1956, in File 130.13/2587/10.
2. Elath sent Sharett a copy of his letter to the British foreign secretary, and noted that the request for Canberra planes as well as the increase in the number of items as compared to what Israel had requested on previous occasions, was made after consultation with Shimon Peres, the director-general of the Ministry of Defence (See Elath to Sharett, 130.02/2394/15).

211. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 20 April 1956

Coded Tel. 695; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur answers Sharett's telegram[1] in which he informed him about Peres' independent approach to the French minister of defence. In his opinion the deal would not go through against Pineau's wishes. He had not stopped Peres in his efforts, but for the sake of caution had not joined him at the meeting with the minister of defence.[2] If the minister of defence wished to sign a contract, Israel could sign since it was free to assume that the minister of foreign affairs had given his consent. The French government could not therefore place the responsibility on Israel. Although there was the danger that in such an event there would be a cooling of relations with Pineau, he did not see himself entitled to hold up an action which might have even the slimmest chance of success.[3]

Notes

1. In this telegram (Sharett to Tsur, 19 April 1956, 130.09/2347/1) Sharett said that he had learned from a telegram from Peres that the French minister of defence had decided to go ahead with the second dozen Mystère planes independently of the French ministry of foreign affairs. He asked how to reconcile this report with the information arriving from Tsur concerning the warnings of Pineau and Mollet, and whether the Ministry of Defence could really bypass the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. For a report on the conversation see Peres to the minister of defence and others, 19 April 1956, IMDEA 230/72/779. The French minister was handed a letter from Ben-Gurion (dated 12 April, ibid.) in which he asked for assistance for Peres'

procurement efforts. The minister promised concrete answers "this Saturday." Peres estimated that the contracts for the dozen Mystères and the dozen Ouragans would also be signed then, "despite the interference of the Quai d'Orsay."

3. And in fact, the contract for the supply of an additional dozen Mystères was signed on 23 April 1956.

212. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 20 April 1956

Coded Tel. 11; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

Avidar reports on his meeting with the East German ambassador. Avidar handed him the memorandum regarding Israel's claim for reparations from East Germany.[1] In the conversation the ambassador explained that his country did not consider itself the heir of the German Reich, and therefore the obligations which applied to West Germany did not apply to it. Avidar replied that the responsibility lay with the whole of Germany and it was Israel's right to demand that East Germany participate in the rehabilitation of the survivors.

Notes

1. See No. 51. For the wording of the memorandum see appendix to L. Kohn's letter to Shinnar, 14 March 1956, 130.02/2418/3.

213. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 23 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA169; Outg: 93.01/2212/14

Summary

Eban replies to Sharett's telegram[1] in which he asked if there was any truth in the rumours concerning a fundamental change in the United States attitude to Israel.[2] Eban explains that there had in fact been some promises and talk about new directions: 1. Talk that trust in Nasser had lessened. 2. Hints that there would be a withdrawal from the Aswan Plan.[3] 3. Talk about encouraging pro-Western forces instead of reliance on Nasser. 4. They had announced that they were no longer opposed to the arming of Israel,

but mainly by encouraging other Western states. 5. They had promised to consider increased economic aid to Israel. 6. They had outlined a plan for the development of the water resources, including a loan from the Export-Import Bank.[6] But none of these amounted to a fundamental change. The disgust with Nasser was accompanied by a significant rapprochement with the Baghdad Pact states. Arms to Israel were not yet in sight, although there was some indication of easing up with regard to the purchase of arms according to the regular licenses. Efforts to obtain arms in other Western countries were continuing. There had not been any breakthrough on economic aid. As regards the water plan, an outline was in fact taking shape and there was no sign of retreat from it. To sum up – the telegram in which he describes the policy of the United States remains unchanged[7] and constitutes an accurate description of current policy.

Notes

1. In this telegram Sharett asked: "Is there any real indication among all the good tidings we have been hearing about a reassessment of State Department policy in the Middle East, or were these just empty words, or was the matter examined and it was decided to return to the previous line of policy?" (See Sharett to Eban, Tel. 928, 23 April 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
2. Should be 28 March – See No. 165.
3. See No. 345, n.1.
4. See Nos. 155 and 156.
5. In fact the United States announced to Egypt on 19 July 1956 that it was withdrawing from its intention of funding part of the construction of the Aswan dam – See note 3 above
6. See No. 297 and n. 4.
7. No. 174.

214. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 23 April 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 663; Outg: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Sharett presents additional reflections[1] on the Soviet statement, after studying it closely in its Russian original. The statement justifies the Czech deal and indicates prior justification to continue the arming of the Arab states. At the same time the statement possibly has the intention of rejecting war and of putting a brake on the Arabs, thereby discouraging the West from

supplying arms to Israel. From the text of the remarks concerning Israel he concludes that the Soviet Union was anxious to participate in the drafting of the U.N. peace plan, according to its own ideas, with the aid of the Bandung bloc.[2] The plan would be adopted as the Assembly proposal or formulated in a special committee and offered to the sides with pressure applied to persuade them that they must accept this verdict. The connection between the Soviet statement and the secretary-general's visit might cause a new crisis in arms procurement by its postponement or removal from the agenda. This danger must be explained through contacts and information. Using the statement and the mission to justify the non-supply of arms accentuates the responsibility of whoever does so and only encourages the aggressor to hold up the defence preparations of the side being threatened.

Notes

1. Sharett sent a first directive following the Soviet announcement on 22 April, more or less along the lines of No. 209 (See Sharett to the Israel Missions Abroad, Tel. 657, 22 April 1956, 130.02/2457/15).
2. See No. 209, n. 6.
3. These remarks were made in a debate on the security situation, see *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, pp. 1683-1686 (Ben-Gurion's speech) and pp. 1725-1727 (Sharett's speech).
4. On 21 April 1956 there appeared in *Izvestya* an article in which Israel was accused of "a crude violation" of the U.N. Charter by its actions on the borders and branded a tool in the hands of "aggressive circles" in the United States and Britain. Strong reservations were also expressed about identifying the armistice lines with permanent borders. In the assessment of the Israel embassy in Moscow this article followed negative reactions on the part of the Arab states to the announcement by the Soviet Foreign Ministry on 17 April, and was designed to prove to them that the Soviet Union's support for the Arab cause remained solid (See the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 111, 22 April 1956, 130.02/2457/5).
5. See No. 3 (Editorial Note).

215. M. Fischer (Ankara) to President I. Ben-Zvi.[1] 24 April 1956

Copy: 130.10/2536/15

Summary

Fischer replies to the president's letter,[2] which was written following Baruch Gilead's survey of Israel-Turkey relations. He replies to several points raised by the president, including quotes from several Turkish comments

which did not indicate sympathy for Israel. He suggests that he disregard the remarks, and notes that the general atmosphere in relations between the two states is most friendly. Without being overly optimistic he hopes that Turkey-Israel relations will develop increasingly in the near future.

Notes

1. Copies of this letter were also sent to the bureau of the minister of foreign affairs and the West European Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. For President Ben-Zvi's letter to Fischer, in which he asked questions and made comments regarding Turkey-Israel relations, see: Israel State Archives, *Izhak Ben-Zvi, The Second President*, pp. 474-475 [Hebrew].
3. The Turkish President, Celâl Bayar, visited Jordan in November 1955. His attempts to persuade Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact were unsuccessful. During a visit to the Old City of Jerusalem Bayar declared that his country would come to the aid of Jordan in the event of an unprovoked attack against it.
4. A small town in the vicinity of el-Jazeera in north-eastern Syria, close to the Turkish border, in which there lived a small community of Kurdish-speaking Jews. The Syrian authorities persecuted this community (See Harman to Eban, 15 May 1956, 130.15/2569/2).
5. The remainder of the paragraph was omitted by the editors.
6. The Baghdad Pact Council convened in Teheran between 16-19 April.
7. For example, on 19 November 1955, on the eve of his departure for the Baghdad Pact Council, the Turkish Prime Minister Menderes declared that his country was convinced that quiet in the Middle East was possible only through a resolution of the Israel-Arab conflict. Therefore it had undertaken in letters exchanged with Iraq to cooperate in implementing the U.N. resolutions on Palestine. He added that Turkey "would enthusiastically welcome" any solution to the Palestine problem which would satisfy the wishes of all the Arab states, and first and foremost its ally Iraq. He also expressed support for Eden's Guildhall plan provided that the Arab states would show interest in it (See Gilead to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 November 1955, 130.15/2536/4).
8. In his speech at the opening of the Baghdad Pact Council which was held in Teheran in April 1956, Menderes attacked Egypt for its opposition to the Baghdad Pact. Among other things he said that the Nasser government did not represent the Egyptian people. The Egyptian media reacted violently against Turkey.
9. Sharett wrote to Fischer that "he had learnt quite a bit from his letter and that he had been very impressed by the political acumen and depth of penetration into the essence of problems which were so lucidly expressed in it" (See Sharett to Fischer, 9 May 1956, 130.15/2536/15).

216. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett and the West European Division. 24 April 1956

Coded Tel. 716; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau.[1] The latter began by sharply criticising Tsur because Israel's arms demands reached him through several channels and the details of the supply were made public.[2] He did not need pressure. When Tsur commented that perhaps his (intelligence) services required it, he said where arms were concerned they had no influence and he was dealing with this personally. Tsur told Pineau that his last conversation[4] with him had worried him. Israel understood the need for United States involvement in the arms issue, but the danger of delay existed and the situation was now more dangerous than ever. He enumerated the dangers in the new Soviet position, which might serve the West as a pretext for delaying the supply. Pineau asked if the 12 additional Mystères combined with the 24 planes from Canada would satisfy Israel. He added that France had pressured Canada to agree to hand over the planes. Tsur said that he did not wish to specify any number, but Israel had to get its air force in an effective defensive capacity by July. After further discussion Pineau said that the 12 Mystères would be ready at the end of May, and he could promise that Israel would receive them. He also promised an additional number of tanks. He asked for absolute secrecy in everything to do with Israel's arms purchases.[9]

Notes

1. Sharett sent Tsur two telegrams with instructions for the meeting with Pineau. In the first one (Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 956, 18 April 1956, 130.09/2347/1) Tsur was instructed to request that at the forthcoming conference of NATO countries he should demand concern for Israel's security and for the demand to restore the arms balance by supplying Israel with arms. In the second (Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 957, 18 April 1956, ibid.) Tsur was asked in the conversation with Pineau to make use of the Soviet declaration on the Middle East "which signals a turning point in our favour by stressing the principle of the territorial status quo and the call for Arab-Israel peace." It further said that "the Soviet declaration is additional proof that Middle East peace will not be assured by the intervention of any power, but the balance of forces is the sole safeguard against a flare up."
2. In a speech in the Knesset on 22 April 1956 Ben-Gurion said among other things "not only to the government of Israel but also to public opinion and also perhaps to some Western governments it has become clear that the only thing which will deter the Egyptian tyrant and his allies from war against Israel is the supply of defensive

weapons in the air, on land and at sea to Israel .... however, this realisation has not until today found practical application, with the exception of France which has done something important in this direction, although this something is still a far cry from satisfying the most minimal requirements" (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), the First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, 22 April 1956, p. 1685).

3. This message was not found.
4. See No. 207.
5. On 23 April 1956 four Tahal Company workers were killed at Kilometre 122 on the road to Eilat.
6. In effect the agreement for the supply of the planes had been signed already on 23 April by the Ministry of Defence – See No. 217 and n. 3 there.
7. See No. 242.
8. In April 1956 the relations between France and Syria became very acute. The Syrian parliament adopted a sharp resolution against French policy in Algeria, and demanded the severing of diplomatic relations with it. In Damascus, and also in Tripoli in Lebanon, demonstrations took place against French policy in Algeria. The French minister of foreign affairs summoned the Syrian and Lebanese ambassadors and voiced sharp criticism of the resolution of the Arab League, which had convened in Cairo at the beginning of April, against France because of its policy in Algeria. (See J. Tsur, *Paris Diary, the Diplomatic Campaign in France 1953-1956*, p. 240 [Hebrew]).
9. Sharett's response: "I have the impression that it was not an easy conversation, but certainly positive. Keep it up" (See Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 5, 25 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).

217. A. Liveran (New York) to W. Eytan. 24 April 1945

Coded Tel. XA192; Outg: 130.09/2332/13

Summary

Liveran reports on Eban's conversation with Sobolev,[1] which revolved around the recent Soviet statement.[2] Eban said that Israel was worried by the upsetting of the arms balance as constituted by the Czech deal and the Soviet Union's position in the Security Council, when on two occasions it had backed the Arab position.[3] Consequently, Israel had lost faith in the U.N.'s ability to intervene in the event of Arab aggression.

Sobolev replied that the intention of the Soviet statement had been to stress Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state that must not be attacked. He justified the shipment of arms to Egypt by a similar supply by the British and Americans to other states in the Middle East. Eban replied that Israel opposed any arms shipment that upset the balance of power, but the Czech shipment had been of unprecedented dimensions in the region and it was

hard to see in it "measures directed at the relaxation of international tension," to quote the Soviet statement.

Afterwards Eban addressed the question of the Russian position in the Security Council. Sobolev explained that their position was not to support any step that was not acceptable to both sides. But this rule did not apply in the case of acts of aggression, when the Security Council must take action against the aggressor. The Soviet Union still supported the principle of direct negotiations between the sides. He asked what Israel would be ready to contribute towards this, and whether Israel's point of departure was not only the armistice agreements but also the U.N. resolutions. Eban explained that Israel's point of departure was only the armistice agreements, and he reiterated its position concerning the borders and the refugees.[4]

Notes

1. This was Eban's second conversation with Sobolev regarding the Soviet statement on the Middle East. In the first conversation, at an Israel Independence Day party at the U.N., Eban said that Israel was closely studying the Soviet statement and would form an opinion shortly (See Eban to Sharett, Tel. X181, 19 April 1956, 93.01/2212/14).
2. See Nos. 209, 214.
3. In these two cases, which were debated in the Security Council in 1954, the Soviets used the veto against the draft resolutions formulated by the Western states.
4. See No. 214, n. 3.

218. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington.[1] 25 April 1956

Coded Tel. TNWA402; Outg: 130.09/2312/9

Summary

Sharett sums up the first stage of the talks with the U.N. secretary-general.

Of the two paragraphs of the 4 April Security Council resolution,[2] the secretary focused on the first paragraph dealing with relaxation of tension, and only briefly touched on the second paragraph, dealing with implementation of the armistice agreement. He preferred to concentrate on urgent issues, the security on the border, the thinning out of forces and resolving the Nitzana problem.

Israel immediately consented to the cease-fire, and agreed to most of his proposals, such as observation posts and U.N. patrols, and also agreed not to resume its patrols along the line itself and to approach the line only in case

of urgent security requirements. For its part, it focused the discussion on the hostile policy and war preparations of the Arabs, and the violation of the first article of the armistice agreement, which forbids hostile acts, and stressed particularly its demand for the cessation of interference with shipping in the Canal and the Straits which constituted a manifestly hostile act. The secretary-general argued that interference with freedom of shipping was not a direct violation of one of the clauses of the armistice agreement but was contrary to the "armistice regime" mentioned in the 1951 resolution.[5] He nonetheless agreed to take up the matter with Egypt, but not within the mandate of his mission under the Security Council resolution but in the context of his authority as U.N. secretary-general. They also discussed Jordan (the secretary-general accepted the validity of Israel's demands for the implementation of Article VIII[8]) and Syria (the secretary-general agreed to inform Syria that any attempt to interrupt the work in the Jordan channel by force or to threaten it with force would constitute a violation of the armistice agreement).

Towards the second stage of the talks Israel could expect a tough struggle when the secretary-general would report that he had met with an outright refusal by Egypt to stop the interference with shipping. He would also try to obtain other concessions from Israel, such as the evacuation of Nitzana in return for the removal of Egyptian forces opposite, and so on.

In putting Israel's case to the representatives of other states they must present Israel's position in a positive light without stressing differences of opinion with the secretary-general. They must stress that the root of the evil is the Egyptian claim that it was still in a state of war and permitted to act as a belligerent party, which was contrary to Article I in the armistice agreement with Egypt. They must stress the right to freedom of navigation which had been approved by the United Nations. With regard to Nitzana they must stress that its non-evacuation was not in reprisal for Egypt's non-acceptance of freedom of navigation but a security necessity. In its day Israel had agreed to arrangements in the region in the context of the armistice agreement since it considered the armistice regime to be a temporary one, as a stage to peace. Now that it had become clear that there was no peace in the offing, it was asking to examine a number of points in the armistice agreement.

Notes

1. Also sent to Moscow and Belgrade.
2. For the text of the resolution see No. 179 (Editorial Note).
3. See No. 200, n. 3.
4. After the signing of the armistice agreement with Syria, the acting mediator Ralph Bunche submitted to the U.N. secretary-general a report on the state of the armistice

agreements and the truce in Palestine. In his opinion, the armistice agreements rendered the truce arrangements of 15 July 1948 obsolete. He recommended abolishing the truce arrangements and reducing to the necessary minimum the U.N. supervisory personnel. The Security Council adopted this recommendation and decided that the armistice agreements cancelled the truce arrangements (See Vol. 4, Companion Volume, Editorial Note on pp. 133-135).

5. The Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951 in favour of the right of freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal – See Vol. 6, Main Volume, Editorial Note on pp. 593-594.
6. In response to Ben-Gurion's message of 13 April 1956 (in File 130.02/2404/3) in which he raised the question of the blockade in the Suez Canal and the interference with Israeli shipping generally, Hammarskjöld replied on 14 April (in File 130.02/2448/3) that he would be able to discuss these subjects, which were outside the mandate he had received from the Security Council, only with the agreement of the two sides in his capacity as U.N. secretary-general. On the same day Sharett replied (see ibid.) that the interference with shipping violated the armistice agreements, as confirmed by the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951. Egypt's agreement to Article II 2 could not be seen as unreserved if it left Egypt with freedom to take such hostile acts as these. Moreover, the Security Council resolution of 4 April explicitly requests Hammarsjköld to undertake a survey of the implementation of the armistice agreement directives (See also Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad, 17 April 1956, 130.09/2377/3).
7. See summary of the talks between the Israeli representatives and Hammarsjköld, prepared by the latter, 20 April 1956, 130.02/2439/7.
8. This article affirms the establishment of a joint committee of representatives of Israel and Jordan to settle the outstanding problems still unresolved, such as access to the Western Wall and the institutions on Mount Scopus – See Vol. 3, Appendix H, p. 717.
9. This alludes to proposals made by Burns to Israel and Syria in the wake of the Israeli attack on the Syrian positions north-east of Lake Tiberias – See No. 35.
10. See n. 3 above. During the Security Council debate on 4 August 1949 Bunche said among other things: "The entire heritage of restrictions which developed out of the undeclared war should be done away with. There should be normal access, restrictions on importation and immigration should be eliminated, there should be free movement for legitimate shipping and no vestiges of the wartime blockade should be allowed to remain as they are inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of the Armistice Agreements" (See *SCOR*, IV Year, 433rd Meeting, 4 August 1949, p. 6).

219. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 25 April 1956

Coded Tel. Circular 672; Outg: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Sharett dispatches a briefing to the Israeli missions prior to the NATO conference,[1] in light of the report that they will also deal there with Middle Eastern issues. He instructs the accredited representatives in those countries whose minister of foreign affairs is about to go to the conference to meet with the minister or his aides and to explain Israel's position. They must warn them against harbouring the illusion that the secretary-general's mission or the Soviet statement had eliminated the danger of war. The problem would not be resolved so long as the arms balance was not corrected. They must also mention the danger of embargo which would only perpetuate the arms gap. The aim of the talks was not to try to ensure that the issue should appear on the conference agenda, but to ensure an appropriate response from Israel's point of view in the event of the issue being raised. They must also warn of the danger that countries in NATO trying to evade direct responsibility for Israel's security or to hamper its efforts to obtain arms will join in collective resolutions pertaining to its security or the supply of arms to it. Such collective resolutions will not help Israel and will only weaken Israel's friends.[6]

Notes

1. The NATO Council convened in Paris on 4-5 May 1956.
2. This refers to the remarks of Sharett and Ben-Gurion in the Knesset, in the context of the debates on the security situation, that the Hammarskjöld mission to the Middle East and the Soviet statement concerning the Middle East did not reduce the danger of war in the region (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, 22-23 April 1956, Vol. XX, pp.1683-1686, 1725-1737).
3. The remarks were made on 14 April 1956 in a Conservative Party club (See *Ha'aretz*, 15 April 1956).
4. See No. 226.
5. See No. 214, n. 4.
6. A report from London (Avner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 991, 7 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1) stated that it had been agreed in the meantime to continue with the institution of consultation by the Three Powers regarding the shipments of arms to the Middle East. The problems associated with Israel-Arab relations, apart from arms, should be returned to the U.N. arena, in particular to the Security Council, in order to allow the Soviets to make crucial contributions to restoring calm and creating an appropriate atmosphere for a settlement. The embassy in Paris reported

(Bendor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 777, 7 May 1956, ibid.) that in the discussions, Pineau said that so far France had been the only one to extend aid to Israel, but "it could not under any circumstances continue to do so alone […] Dulles had not committed himself to anything, but insisted on the difficulties in the United States in an election year." Selwyn Lloyd said that his country "had tried to broker a settlement between the Arab states and Israel, but the parties were not prepared for negotiations" and a solution did not appear to be in the offing.

220. E. Nishri (Paris) to the Chief of the General Staff (I.D.F.). 25 April 1956

Coded Tel. 282; Inc.: IMDEA 230/72/779

Summary

Nishri reports on a conversation between Peres and the French junior minister for the land forces Max Lejeune. The latter informed him that he was prepared to put pressure on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to supply Israel as quickly as possible with 60 AMX tanks, 40 self-propelling 105mm guns and 1000 bazookas. He was prepared to take them out of the army warehouses and supply them rapidly. He stressed the need for indirect pressure on Pineau via the Socialist Party, and also referred to this party's traditional friendship with Israel. He stressed that Prime Minister Mollet supported his viewpoint against Pineau. He believed that the next few days would also see a turnabout in Pineau's attitude.

221. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 25 April 1956

Coded Tel. 943; Outg.: 130.09/2326/5

Summary

Sharett reports on a difficult conversation he had with the Soviet Ambassador Abramov, which dealt with the Soviet statement and with an article published subsequently in *Izvestya*.[1,2] Sharett noted that despite several positive points in the statement, many questions remained. It was not clear to Israel what the Soviet Union's policy was with regard to the balance of forces; the violation of this balance by the Soviet Union endangered Israel. Now it had been reported that an arms deal was taking shape with Syria.[4]

Could they expect a continuation of this unilateral arming? It was also regrettable that the Soviet Union had not mentioned direct negotiation as the appropriate means of a settlement between the parties, nor had freedom of navigation been mentioned as one of the Security Council resolutions requiring implementation.

Abramov replied angrily and sharply, referring to Sharett's Knesset speech.[3] He said that this speech had saddened him, and it was clear to him that Israel did not want to understand the Soviet statement. He ended by saying that he was disappointed. Sharett replied that Israel was in danger and that the Soviet Union's behaviour was not lessening it.

Notes

1. No. 205.
2. See No. 214, n. 4.
3. See ibid., n. 3, No. 219, n. 2.
4. See No. 226.
5. As a supplement to this telegram Sharett sent to Moscow a further telegram (No. 7, 30 April 1956, 130.09/2326/5) and noted that "this is the second or third time that Abramov has permitted himself an insolent remark and an overt display of hostility. In my opinion we should stop inviting him and make this obvious." Sharett asked if it was worthwhile seeking an opportunity to comment on this to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and compared Abramov's response to that of Semyonov in his conversation with Avidar (No. 223). Ambassador Avidar replied that he recommended to stop inviting Abramov, but not to make a big issue of it (See his telegram 135, 2 May 1956, 130.09/2326/7).

222. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 26 April 1956

Coded Tel. 192; Outg: 130.09/2311/8

Summary

Eban reports on Silver's conversation with the president and Dulles. After Silver had presented Israel's position, the president replied that Israel's security and development were dear to his heart and its preservation was a solid element of United States policy. His main aspiration was to bring a peace settlement nearer, and he was not despairing of that. Hence his wish to refrain from any step which might imperil this hope. He mentioned a number of American efforts to bring about a settlement, as for example

the Johnston mission, which "the sides had thwarted." Silver hastened to correct him and stressed that Israel had agreed to the plan, whereas the Arabs had rejected it. Dulles confirmed Silver's words, to the president's astonishment.

Dulles explained the motivations of the American approach which favoured the supply of arms through other countries. The president broke in and said that direct American approval was not out of the question. When Silver argued that without an American move there would not be success in other places, Dulles replied that this was precisely the question he would try to clarify in a few more days, and he would talk with Pearson and Pineau about this.

The president said that in the long term there was no future for Israel except in a peace settlement. Silver said that Israel was prepared to discuss every problem with the Arabs. The president asked if this also meant the problem of the passage in the southern Negev.[3] Silver replied that there was no point in speaking now before there was even any negotiation. Dulles complained about the Zionist pressure, Silver corrected him and said that the whole of American public opinion was involved. Eisenhower replied that this was his impression as well.[6]

Notes

1. See No. 108, n. 3.
2. See No. 205.
3. See No. 12, n. 3.
4. Between 24 April and 7 May 1956 the Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress convened in Jerusalem. In his speech on 24 April Ben-Gurion said among other things: .."and the United States and Britain, who did not refrain from sending arms to several Arab states, have in fact placed an embargo on the State of Israel. This embargo only encourages Arab aggression, and from day to day the danger of war against Israel increases" (See the Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress, stenographic report, p. 17).
5. In a conversation with Blaustein, Dulles said that the differences between the State Department and Israel were being increasingly reduced and there was no justification for all the bitterness existing in Israel. He enumerated all the efforts the United States had made in the Western capitals and said that Israel was purchasing arms now and would be purchasing more in the future. He still preferred the indirect solution and there were international considerations favouring such a solution (See Eban to the United States Division, WIA 196, 27 April 1956, 93.01/2212/14).
6. Sharett responded and asked how to interpret the president's amazement when told that Israel had cooperated with Johnston and only the Arabs had sabotaged the mission. This amazement also raised a serious question with regard to the president's impression of Israel's position in the Anderson mission affair (See Sharett to Eban, IWA957, 30 April 1956, 130.09./2311/6).

223. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 26 April 1956

Coded Tel. 122; Inc.: 130.02/2457/15

Summary

Avidar reports on a conversation with Deputy Foreign Minister Semyonov, dealing with the Soviet statement.[1]

Avidar asked five questions and Semyonov replied, whilst noting that his authority was limited.

1. By a settlement did they mean a contractual peace?

He replied that the Soviet Union meant a stable peace and the Soviet Union was prepared to help to achieve it.

2. Would the Soviet Union be prepared to halt the unilateral shipments of arms to the Middle East and insist on the restoration of the balance of power?

He replied that he did not accept the definition of unilateral arming. Israel was also arming itself. Israel's neighbours had many concerns and just interests and their independence had to be enhanced.

3. Did the Soviet Union favour the implementation of all the Security Council resolutions, including the one referring to freedom of navigation?

He replied in the affirmative, but it was difficult for him to answer regarding the question of freedom of navigation. It was clear to him that there were insoluble problems between the two sides, and Israel too had not complied with all the Council resolutions.

4. Could he explain why Israel had not been included among the states whose independence the Soviet Union felt required strengthening?

He explained that the Arab states had achieved their independence only recently and their independence was still in danger. There was a difference between Israel, with its standard of living, and the Arab states. He did not intend by this assertion to exclude Israel, but to lay the stress on those who were most in need of assistance.

5. Did the Soviet Union view direct negotiations as the correct way of achieving stable peace? He replied that he was unable to address this subject.

The entire conversation took place in a relaxed atmosphere.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 205.
2. In File 130.11/2505/24.

224. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 27 April 1956

Coded Tel. IWA951; Outg: 130.09/2311/6

Summary

Sharett cables that Israel must raise the water question again. From the reports[1] he understands that the Americans agree to Israel's working outside the demilitarized zone and were prepared to reach agreement with Israel about projects undertaken on the Jordan River which would not contradict the Johnston plan or the Jordanian project.[2] From Dulles' public remarks[3] it seemed that the United States believed that Israel had abandoned the plan to resume the work in the demilitarized zone this season, and that there was no chance that the Arabs would accept the Johnston plan. He asks to clarify the matter urgently.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 165 on Eban's conversation on 28 March with Dulles and his aides, and Eban's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 166, 21 April, 130.02/3694/10, according to which the embassy officials had spoken with Johnston who promised to back the water plan as Russell had described it in the Eban-Dulles conversation mentioned above.
2. This refers to the Eastern Ghor plan – See No. 165, n. 10.
3. See Comay to Sharett, 158, 3 April 1956, 93.01/2287/2.
4. In the press conference on 24 April 1956 Dulles answered a question regarding the resumption of work on the Jordan channel in the demilitarized zone, and said that from the legal standpoint things remained as they were when the work had been suspended three years previously, in compliance with the demands of the U.N. and General Bennike, based on the claim that the work constituted a form of violation of the armistice agreements. He was unaware, Dulles added, of any subsequent developments capable of changing the legal situation.
5. Shiloah replied that the embassy had acted energetically and as far as was known the State Department was engaged in drafting an announcement to Israel which would include their attitude to the loan which Israel had requested and their approval of Israel's work outside the demilitarized zone. The difficulty for the Americans was how to formulate their commitment without appearing as the arbiters in matters which came within the authority of the chief of staff of the U.N. observers, Burns. Eban for his part would also try draft a similar statement for the State Department (See Shiloah to Sharett, Tel. 204, 28 April 1956, 130.09/2311/8).

225. G. Avner (London) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 27 April 1956

Coded Tel.; Inc.: 130.02/2457/15

Summary

Avner analyses the visit of the Russian leaders to Britain[1,2] from Israel's standpoint. There was no doubt that when the Russians came to sum up the visit they could not ignore the role played by the Jewish problem and the question of Israel and the Middle East in public opinion and in political circles in Britain. The Jewish question had been dealt with by the British press from all angles, and they were aware that the Jewish community in Britain was deeply concerned and aroused; the subject also preoccupied the Labour Party. The question of Israel and the Middle East was also among the main international issues that the government, the opposition and the press were interested in. From the joint statement[4] it may be concluded that agreement was not reached, but the fact that several phrases in it were essentially a repetition of the previous week's Soviet statement,[5] confirmed the significance of that statement. To the extent that these phrases were closer to the Israeli position they give them international validity and the Arabs also could not ignore this fact. As against this, there was a major negative aspect, namely that the Soviets had in fact reserved for themselves all the possibilities of manoeuvre and action as before, including the issue of the supply of arms. Even the more positive sections dealing with Israel's status in the Middle East left a great deal of room for hostile Soviet actions towards Israel in the future.

Notes

1. The prime minister of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Bulganin, and the first secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, visited Britain from 18 to 27 April 1956.
2. Two days later Avner sent additional details on the political talks held by Bulganin and Khrushchev with the British leaders. The British demanded that the Soviets desist from all actions which increased tension in the region, that they should make clear to the states in the region that they were not interested in fomenting tension, and that they should stop supporting Arab actions which undermined British interests, especially where oil was concerned. They made it clear that Britain would oppose any additional attempts to subvert the region. The Soviets replied that the source of the tension lay in the Baghdad Pact and other Western treaties which posed a danger to the Soviet Union. They had no interests in the region apart from the independence of the states in it, and so long as the Pact and treaties existed and there was a flow of Western arms, they too were free to send arms (See Avner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 955, 29 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).

3. According to Avner, in the course of the talks between the Soviet delegation and the Labour Party leaders there was a very tense atmosphere between the parties and it was not possible to discuss problems in a businesslike and serious manner (See Avner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 938, 25 April 1956, 130.09/2321/2).
4. The paragraph referring to the Middle East – See the Appendix to this document in the Main Volume.
5. See No. 205.
6. See No. 214.
7. One word is missing in the original.
8. From "Reports to the Israel Missions Abroad," No. 1152, 18 May 1956. The announcement was issued on 26 April 1956.

226. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to R. Shiloah (Washington). 29 April 1956

Coded Tel. 955; Outg: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Eytan reports that they had received news from a confidential source of a Czech-Syrian arms deal brokered by the Egyptians and the Soviets. In the framework of the deal arms and military equipment to the value of 30 million dollars would be delivered, including tanks, planes and artillery. The supply of the equipment had already begun. The Czechs were trying to exploit the deal also for economic penetration of Syria, and there were many reports of the arrival of Czech experts in Syria.

227. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to T. Kollek (New York). 29 April 1956

Coded Tel. 161; Outg: 130.02/2448/6

Summary

Ben-Gurion writes that there were real grounds for assuming that Nasser would attack Israel in June or July together with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Israel was increasingly despairing of obtaining jet aircraft in the United States. But it was possible to equip all the divisions and also to obtain some jets on condition of cash payment. The sum required was 45 million dollars, 35 of which would fall on United States Jewry. There had been a government consultation, and it was decided to invite a list of people

to Israel next week to discuss emergency aid. He asks for Kollek's and Eban's opinion on this.[1]

Notes

1. Kollek replied that the fundraising campaign in the United States was in full swing and was based on the feeling of the Jewish leaders that the political efforts in the United States had not succeeded and that the only way to help Israel was in fact by financial assistance. It was expected that in the next few months about 35-40 million dollars would be raised, including from the sale of Bonds and the United Jewish Appeal. If the people Ben-Gurion had mentioned were invited to Israel this would adversely affect the campaign that was underway (See Kollek to the prime minister, 30 April 1956, Tel. X201, 130.09/2332/13). Eban raised the issue in a meeting with Jewish leaders who recommended that official emissaries from Israel at the highest level should come and meet with a group of leading businessmen in closed meetings in all the cities and centres. It was also recommended that the prime minister arrive in the United States for two or three days to boost the campaign activity (See Eban to Sharett, Tel. 223, 3 May 1956, 130.02/2448/6).
2. The Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress convened in Jerusalem at that time.

228. President Eisenhower (Washington) to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion. 30 April 1956

Notes

1. No. 0152.
2. On the Hammarskjöld report, published on 9 May, see No. 240.

229. A. Eban (Washington) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 30 April 1956

Coded Tel. WIA207; Outg.: 93.01/2212/14

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Dulles. He had begun by expressing Israel's wish to strengthen ties both in assessing the dangers in the Middle East and taking joint action to eliminate them. In his opinion the United States could evolve a policy that would simultaneously meet Israel's security needs and also answer the vital needs of the Western world. He analysed the

dangers facing Israel, including the danger of an Arab attack in the coming summer,[1] noted the increasing arming of Egypt, the Syrian deal and the Russian policy as expressed in the recently issued statement[6] and which was no more than a manoeuvre designed to prove that the blame lay with the West which did not wish to give up its alliances in the Middle East. The conclusion from all these was that the balance of power must be restored, particularly in the air, and this should be accomplished by the summer. Israel recognised the American formula whose principle thrust was that its demands should be met through other countries, but to give substance it was up to the United States to set an example by action. There was here a slide rule problem, namely a carefully calculated American action that would reassure France and Canada on the one hand, and yet would not go so far as to risk encouraging a negative reaction by the Soviets.

Later in the course of the conversation Eban mentioned the need for progress on the water issue,[10] and asked the United States to clarify its position to the president of the Export-Import Bank who would be visiting him the next day.

Dulles' remarks: he expressed satisfaction with Israel's desire to remove the tension. With regard to the arms, he promised to talk with Pineau and Pearson about the need for an American step in order to enable them to take action. He had the impression that the Mystère matter was progressing and the Canadians had told him that any additional American action would be harmful because of the sensitivity in Canada to looking as if it was being dragged after the United States. Eban replied that he had talked with the Canadian ambassador and the situation was clear. He added also that there was no need for statements, but an act to serve as an example was desirable. The secretary accepted the explanation and promised to bring up the matter for clarification and decision in Paris the following week. With regard to water he instructed Russell, who was present at the conversation, to convey a positive opinion to the Bank.[15]

Notes

1. See No. 227.
2. According to UNWRA sources in Gaza the refugees in the Strip, numbering about 300,000, planned to go in June 1956 on a "silent" march towards the Israel border with the aim of returning to their homes (See *Haaretz* 29 April 1956). It transpired that these reports were baseless.
3. See No. 226.
4. This apparently refers to the military pact signed on 21 April between Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. This pact replaced the one between Egypt and Saudi Arabia of October 1955. Among the aims of the pact was "defence against Israeli aggression."

5. The chief of staff of the Jordanian Army, Major-General Radi Innab, visited Cairo at the end of April 1956 to coordinate the military plans of Egypt and Jordan along the armistice lines with Israel.
6. No. 205.
7. See No. 165.
8. This refers to a number of helicopters which were purchased in the United State directly from the local manufacturer under a State Department export license, and not via the Department of Defense in the context of reimbursable aid.
9. Muhammad Mussadeq, the prime minister of Iran, 1951-53; on his initiative the Iranian Parliament ratified a law nationalising the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. As a result, the flow of Iranian oil ceased, and the state was on the verge of bankruptcy. In August 1953 Mussadeq was ousted in a military coup.
10. See No. 224, n. 4.
11. See No. 165.
12. In a debate at the Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress, on 24 April 1956. Sharett paid tribute to the "generous assistance" which Israel had received and was still receiving from "the government and people of the United States" (See the Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress, stenographic report, p. 139).
13. Heeney told Eban that further positive announcements by the United States government were not desirable, but a silent example was required. This was the first and primary consideration now (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Comay, Tel. 209, 30 April 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
14. See Eban to Sharett, Tel. 200, 30 April 1956, 130.09/2332/13.
15. Sharett was disappointed and troubled by this conversation – See No. 234.

230. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 1 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA213; 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Eban writes that from the prime minister's telegrams on the financial problem[1] he had learnt that there was a specific report that an attack on Israel was expected in June or July. It was clear that action had to be taken in the financial and arms procurement spheres, but political steps must also be taken and Dulles, Pearson, Pineau and others informed about the report. They must also consider an international warning, preparations in the Security Council and arousing public opinion, especially after the reassurances of Hammarskjöld and the Soviets.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 227.

2. Ben-Gurion, who saw this telegram, replied that he did not think that these political steps should be taken at present. In his opinion his and Sharett's remarks in the Knesset (see Nos. 214, 216) had clarified Israel's position that Hammarskjöld's mission and the Soviet declaration did not diminish the danger of war in the slightest. Hammarskjöld was trying to obtain from Nasser the lifting of the blockade of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, and even if he was dubious about the chances of success, Israel would do nothing to hamper him, and would therefore be content for the present with internal Jewish action (See Ben-Gurion to Eban, Tel. 968, 2 May 1956, 130.09/2311/6).

231. Editorial Note

Israel's Undertakings to Maintain the Cease-fire and Cooperate with the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization Following the Meetings with Hammarskjöld

Between 1-3 May 1956 Hammarskjöld held a second round of talks in Israel. In the context of the talks a number of agreements, clarifications and statements by Israel were drafted and put in writing, as follows:

1. Israel's agreement to consider positively requests by Syrian fishermen to fish in Lake Tiberias.
2. Its agreement with regard to guidelines for Israeli patrols close to the armistice line in the Gaza Strip. Israel would dispatch such patrols only in the event of security needs.
3. Clarification of Israel's position regarding Article VII (6) of the Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement. Israel recognises the Mixed Armistice Commission's right to interpret the agreement, but this right has no connection with Israel's view that the demilitarised zones are sovereign Israeli territory.
4. Clarification by Israel regarding the freedom of movement of the U.N. observers. The U.N. observers will enjoy the same freedom of movement that every resident and visitor to Israel enjoys, and they will also be accorded such freedom of movement as will be required to carry out the armistice agreements.
5. Permission for the residents of Syria to draw water from Lake Tiberias for their needs and the needs of their flocks, on condition that no installations for this purpose will be set up.
6. A fresh formulation of Israel's demands with regard to the implementation of Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement concerning the freedom of access to Mount Scopus and the Holy Places, and the resumption of traffic movement on the Latrun-Jerusalem road, etc.

7. Israel's comments on the Burns letter concerning the implementation of Articles VII and VIII of the Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement dealing with the demilitarized zone in Nitzana.

8. Clarification by Israel concerning the resumption of the diversion works in the Jordan channel. Israel considers the fact that the Security Council had not reached a decision over Syria's complaint on this matter as rejection of the Syrian complaint, and therefore its consent to halt the work, which was given for the duration of the debate in the Security Council, was no longer valid.

(The documents in their entirety in file 130.02/2448/4. The document concerning the resumption of work in the Jordan channel in file 130.02/3688/10.)

232. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 3 May 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 692; 130.02/2404/4

Summary

Rafael reports on the prime minister's talks with Hammarsjköld.

The prime minister began by saying that he doubted the effectiveness and sincerity of Egypt's commitments according to Article II Clause 2 of the armistice agreement with Egypt in light of the incidents that had occurred yesterday.[2] The secretary-general promised to demand that Egypt take practical measures to halt the infiltrations. He would deal with the matter when he returned to Cairo.

With regard to the implementation of Articles VII and VIII the secretary-general suggested that Israel should agree in principle to implement them, but should delay the implementation until it received an indication from Egypt of its readiness to act peacefully. He agreed that this indication would be the lifting of the restrictions on shipping in the Straits and the Canal.

He said that he had obtained from Jordan an undertaking for a cease-fire and actions against the fedayeen, but on Article VIII he had not been able to obtain anything.

Regarding Syria, Hammarskjöld had suggested the stationing of observers on both sides to safeguard the arrangements that had been obtained regarding Lake Tiberias. Israel had rejected the proposal to station observers on its side pending further examination but had agreed to give Syrian fishermen permits to fish. Until now Hammarskjöld had not managed to obtain Syrian agreement for a cease-fire. The Syrians had tried to make this conditional

Notes

1. Sharett cabled that he had to report to the government on the last Eban-Dulles conversation on 30 April (No. 229) and he was quite perplexed. The government had expressed disgust over the continued lobbying of the United States to obtain arms. Sharett explained, according to the information he possessed, that the initiative for the conversation had come from the Americans and it mainly centred on a report of the attempts to obtain arms in France and Canada. Now it turned out that the conversation had once again become a persuasion campaign by Eban to obtain arms, did not contain any general discussion of United States Middle East policy and contained nothing new. He asked for a personal reply (See Tel. 973 [in error 971 in the original], 4 May 1956, 130.09/2212/4).
2. See No. 229.
3. See No. 195.
4. See ibid., n. 4.
5. See No. 195.
6. See No. 201.
7. The telegram, of 27 April 1956, in File 93.01/2212/14, is identical with No. 219.
8. This telegram contains instructions for Eban's conversation with Dulles: a description of the procurement situation and a survey of the situation in the Middle East (See Sharett to Eban, Tel. IW956, 28 April 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
9. Tsur wrote that from his preliminary conversations prior to the meeting of the three western foreign ministers the following week, fears were growing that France would hesitate to continue to supply arms unless the United States agreed to supply on its part, even if only small quantities (See his telegram to Eban and the United States Division, No. 741, 30 April 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
10. Comay reported on the situation in Canada regarding Israel's arms request. His conclusion was that the encouragement from Washington to approve this deal was vital, although not in itself decisive, and it depended largely on the extent of Pearson's backing for the deal (See Comay to Sharett, Tel. 159, 4 April 1956, 93.01/2287/2).

235. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 4 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA237; Outg: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Following Sharett's telegram,[1] Eban talked with Troxel in the State Department. Russell and Burgess were also present. Eban explained that they should not wait for the Israeli draft concerning the water question. Israel believed that it was entitled to begin work at once. Dulles had in the past suggested that Israel should delay the work until the United States formulated an overall plan that would include development inside and outside the Jordan Basin, as well as the exploitation of Israel's share of the Jordan waters with American help, in return for a United States undertaking

to support work in the demilitarized zone at a specified date.[2] Israel had not rejected this plan, but had not committed itself to it until it had studied it in detail. He asked how matters stood and when Israel would see a written document.

Troxel replied that it was desirable that the two governments agree on an overall plan for exploiting the water in Israel inside and outside the Jordan Basin which would specify phasing for the implementation of the work, including the work in the demilitarized zone. The United States would rely on this plan when it presented its request for a loan. When there was agreement a memorandum would be drafted. Eban understood that there would not be an explicit reference to the suspension of the work in the demilitarized zone, but that this would be understood from the various stages of implementation. In the State Department they were currently engaged in drafting such a memorandum. Eban mentioned the urgency of the matter and said that Israel was waiting for an American draft. He suggested to Sharett that the main thrust of his response should be to emphasise the urgency.[4]

Notes

1. Sharett reiterated his opposition to Eban's suggestion that Israel prepare a draft paper for the Americans regarding water (See No. 224 and n. 5 there) on the grounds that "if we submit a draft it is as if we are explicitly expressing our prior agreement to postpone the work, even before we have heard any clear statement from them" (See telegram of 4 May 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
2. See No. 165.
3. This memorandum was not found, but in File 130.23/6451/3 there is an appendix to it containing maps, dated April 1956. In the same file there is also a letter from Sherman to Sharett from 14 June 1956 to which is appended Israel's case with regard to the loan from the Export-Import Bank. It is likely that the content of this summary is in line with the spirit of the memorandum given to the Bank.
4. For Sharett's response see No. 249.

236. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 4 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA234; Outg: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Eban reports that after a conversation with Allen in the State Department, they had informed him that all of Israel's requests for items of arms that were not included in the list presented on 16 November had been approved, with the exception of certain items, but these were precisely some of the most

important ones, such as tanks. Among the items that had been approved were Harvard training planes, 2 fighter planes of the F-51 type, half tracks and spare parts. Whilst it was true that these were all of little significance in view of the new dangers, they nevertheless had a specific value from the standpoint of the campaigns in other capitals.[3]

Notes

1. See No. 219.
2. This refers to a letter which Eban gave to the acting secretary of state, Hoover, on 16 November, which contained details of Israel's arms requests (See Shiloah to Herzog, 16 November 1955, 130.09/2311/8).
3. For details of the arms approved for Israel see the embassy in Washington's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, W1243, 7 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1. In a further telegram Eban reported that the permits had been received "all in correct order," and that the Americans had requested them not to bring up the subject in talks with the Canadians and the French. In another telegram Eban wrote to Sharett that it was possible that some of the items Israel had requested were not of military value vis-à-vis the new dangers, but it was politically expedient to utilise all the permits because of their value in principle and their effect on other capitals. Sharett replied that he understood that the permits in question were those which had been held up for several months and that, for all the importance of this development, it was "essentially the cancelling of a loss and not actually additional profit." Sharett pointed out several items that Israel no longer needed. Peres also cabled a list of items for which there was no further use (See Eban to Sharett, W1251, 8 May 1956, 130.09/2311/8; WI245, 7 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1; Sharett to Eban, IW1, 14 May 1956, 130.09/2311/6; Peres to the embassy in Washington and the Ministry of Defence delegation in New York, TNW415, 14 May 1956, 130.09/2311/9).

237. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 6 May 1956

Coded Tel. 772; Inc.: 130.02/2456/1

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Massigli who informed him about unofficial talks that had been held between the ministers of foreign affairs in Paris concerning the Middle East. It turns out that Dulles had been stubbornly opposed to the direct supply of American arms to Israel. Pineau insisted that the United States should participate in the supply. In Massigli's opinion France would not continue to supply arms unless Dulles changed his position.

Notes

1. This refers to a report issued by the Associated Press agency in the United States according to which the French ambassador in Washington said that the issue of the sale of the second dozen Mystères would shortly be arranged. In Eban's opinion the report came at the instigation of the State Department and was designed to put pressure on France so as to ease the pressure on the State Department (See Eban to Tsur and the United States Division, Tel. WPT93, 30 April 1956, 130.02/2455/5).
2. See No. 225.

238. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 8 May 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 705; Inc.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

Sharett sums up the talks with the U.N. secretary-general.[1]

Israel's position had been balanced, firm on principle with willingness for concessions on non-vital matters. In spite of the sharp exchanges and the differences of opinion that had remained, the overall picture was one of cooperation and mutual respect.

In the course of the discussions the secretary-general had given way on three issues under Israeli pressure. With regard to shipping, he had abandoned his opposition to dealing with the matter. Regarding the border incidents he had argued at first that they did not constitute a violation by Egypt of Article II2, but he had changed his mind and traveled to Cairo to try to obtain further commitments. On the issue of interpretation of the 4 April Security Council resolution,[4] at first he had argued that his mission was mainly according to Paragraph 3 of the resolution, but after an argument he accepted Israel's view of the extreme importance of Paragraph 2, namely calling for not merely a survey but real concern for implementation.

On the other hand he had displayed a dangerous tendency to espouse the Arab position on several issues, such as the attempt to avoid discussing Article I of the armistice agreements, justifying non-compliance with Article VIII of the agreement with Jordan and also a tendency to be misled by Arab promises.

In the talks he had at first called for the implementation of Articles VII and VIII separately, but when Israel insisted on combining them with Article I with emphasis on shipping, he had been disposed to follow this path and had himself composed a draft for Israel's letter to him in which this position had been laid down hard and fast.[6] He stated verbally that he understood

Israel's inability to pull out the I.D.F. from Nitzana as long as they were facing an Egyptian threat there. He also said that if the promise concerning navigation was broken this would justify the I.D.F. returning to Nitzana.

It was clear that the secretary-general's mission was not an isolated episode, and that in addition to the General Assembly and the Security Council there had appeared a third institution of the U.N. which was dealing with Israel's affairs on a regular basis, and that was the secretary-general.[9]

Notes

1. See No. 231 (Editorial Note).
2. On the transformation in Hammarskjöld's position on the shipping issue see No. 218 and n. 6 there, and No. 263. However, in the report he submitted to the Security Council he reverted to his original position, but noted in the report that "it is understood that the question raised by the government of Israel must be discussed, in light of the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951, that the blockade is in contravention of the armistice regime since this regime put an end to the situation in which Egypt could claim belligerent rights" (See the U.N. secretary-general's report to the Security Council, of 9 May 1956, pp. 27-28, U.N. Document S/3596, and also in File 130.02/2448/4. See also No. 240 – Editorial Note).
3. See No. 232, n. 2.
4. See No. 179 (Editorial Note).
5. Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary, quoting Eytan: "The version agreed upon by Hammarskjöld and Nasser is that the two sides will agree to comply with Articles VII-VIII, after which Egypt will give a sign (reduction of forces in Sinai) and they will then proceed to implement Articles VII-VIII, and then proceed to abolishing the restrictions in Suez and Tiran (See Ben-Gurion's entries in his diary, 1 May 1956, Ben-Gurion Archives).
6. See No. 263, n.17.
7. See ibid., n. 25.
8. In December 1955 sixteen states were admitted to the U.N.: Austria, Italy, Ireland, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Jordan, Laos, Libya, Nepal, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Ceylon, Cambodia, and Romania.
9. Kidron differed with some of Sharett's comments, in particular on the matter of shipping, and wrote as follows: "He has not abandoned the distinction between his mission and his powers as secretary-general; in the report it states explicitly that in his opinion the shipping did not come within the framework of the mission." On the subject of the Jordan diversion he wrote: "He did not present the resumption of the work as a violation of the Security Council resolution, but argued that neither he nor we were entitled to interpret the resolution as permission to work" (See Kidron to Sharett, Tel. X233, 9 May 1956, 130.02/2404/4).

239. Consultation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (8, 14 May 1956)[1]

Copy: 130.11/2497/1

Summary

The consultation focused on the information and propaganda activity throughout the countries of the Western world on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union.[2] Nehemia Levanon began by explaining the basic guidelines for this activity which were that since Russian Jewry was an asset for the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and since it still entertained the aspiration for a Jewish life and immigration, awareness of the existence of the Jewish problem must be conveyed to world Jewry and the world at large. This struggle must be waged among cultural organisations, religious leaders and Jewish communities. This campaign would be conducted by world Jewry and its organisations, but the direction would come from Israel. There was no need or point in covering up Israel's part in this activity, and it would only raise Israel's prestige in the eyes of world Jewry and the Soviet Union.

First Levanon and then Harman described the various tours and activities that had already been undertaken. They said that many (largely gentiles) had advised them not to place the emphasis on cultural and religious issues but on the demand for immigration to Israel.

Isser Harel drew attention to what was happening in the Soviet Union. There were signs that a quiet revolution was taking place in that country, signs of the loosening of the leash. Therefore an Israeli initiative in the sphere of immigration should be taken.

Avigur also thought so. The Communist world was beginning to listen more to what was being said abroad. Israel still had not decided what the first demand should be – immigration or self-determination. He was in favour of appearing openly everywhere. They should appear with the slogan "Let my people go."

Sharett sums up: The issues of immigration and self-determination were always a part of Israel's demands from the Soviet Union, although the degree of emphasis on these two issues fluctuated from time to time according to circumstances. As for the public aspect of the demand, Israel had already in the past raised it publicly and the minister of foreign affairs had talked with the heads of government in the Soviet Union.[11] In any case it was clear to all that the State of Israel was behind all the activities. He agreed that it was

necessary to concentrate all the activity in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to brief the Israel missions abroad.

Notes

1. The consultation was held in two meetings, on 8 May, and on 14 May. Taking part were the minister of foreign affairs, Walter Eytan (only in the second meeting), Isser Harel, Shaul Avigur, Amos Manor, Moshe Carmil, Binyamin Lubotzky (Eliav), Nehemia Levanon, Yeshayahu Dan, Avraham Harman, Arye Eshel and Zeev Shek, who took the minutes.
2. "Bar," a section within Nativ, the body dealing with Soviet and East European Jewry, was established in 1955. Bar was assigned the task of explaining the issue of the Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Western countries (See N. Levanon, *"Nativ" was the Code Name*, pp. 141-143 [Hebrew]).
3. Towards the end of 1955 it was decided to send the director of Bar, Nehemia Levanon, for a tour of Europe, in order to consolidate and formalise the section's activities (See ibid., p. 146).
4. Not found, but see ibid., pp. 147-154.
5. The Danish prime minister, Hans Hansen, the Norwegian prime minister, Einar Gerhardsen, and the Swedish prime minister, Tage Erlander.
6. See No. 158.
7. In the autumn of 1955 Reuven Barkat, the director of the Political Department of the Histadrut, was active on a mission for Bar in the Scandinavian countries, where the workers and trade union parties had a great deal of power (See N. Levanon, *"Nativ" was the Code Name*, p. 144).
8. See No. 158.
9. See No. 225.
10. Included in the resolutions of the Twenty Fourth Zionist Congress, which convened in April-May 1956, was an appeal to the Soviet Union to grant the right of emigration to all Jews who desired it (See the Twenty-Fourth Zionist Congress, stenographic report, pp. 547-548; for the speeches of Ben-Gurion and Goldmann see pp. 14 and 24).
11. Sharett raised the subject with Vyshinsky twice: first in December 1950, when they met in New York. Vyshinsky said that giving the Jews the right to leave was contrary to the very system of the Soviet Union. (See Vol. 5, No. 443). In December 1951 the ministers met in Paris. This time Vyshinsky made a distinction between family reunification, in the context of which every request would be thoroughly examined, and emigration, about which there was nothing to talk. The sovereign regime of the Soviet Union did not permit this (See Vol. 7, No. 6). A report on the Sharett-Malik conversation concerning immigration was not found.
12. Eliashiv's conversation with Gromyko took place in December 1953. Eliashiv received a negative answer "with a hitherto unheard decisiveness" (See Vol. 8, No. 599).
13. On 19 April Sharett instructed Avidar to hold "as soon as possible" a conversation on the subject of immigration at the highest level possible. He must explain that the great satisfaction among the Israeli public over the Soviet Union's humane approach to the issue of family reunification was liable to turn into disappointment if it turned out that the Soviet Union was systematically sending only elderly people to Israel (See Sharett to Avidar, Tel. 387, 19 April 1956, 130.09/2326/3). Avidar responded by

an analysis of the material relating to the immigration of relatives; his conclusion was that "we have no reason at all at present to complain to the government here that they are systematically sending only old men and women." Consequently, he suggested delaying for the present the approach on this issue (See Avidar to Sharett, 21 April 1956, 130.11/2502/8).

14. Avraham Leib Zissu, and Misu Benvenisti, a lawyer, were sentenced in 1954 to life imprisonment for Zionist activity. Both were pardoned and released in April 1956.
15. Mordecai Oren, who was imprisoned in Prague from the end of 1951, was released from prison in May 1956 – see No. 79, n. 1.
16. Binyamin Lubotzky (Eliav), the cultural adviser in the Israel embassy in Argentina (1953-1956). Upon ending his term of duty he replaced Nehemia Levanon as head of Bar. His visit to South America took place in July-August 1956.

240. Editorial Note

Report by the Secretary-General of the U.N. on his Mission to the Middle East

On 9 May 1956 Hammarskjöld presented to the Security Council a report on his mission to the Middle East in April-May 1956 in accordance with the Security Council resolution of 4 April 1956 (see No. 179). The report contained a summary of his talks with the leaders of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, in the course of which they had undertaken unconditionally to honour the 1949 armistice agreements, whilst reserving the right of self-defence. Egypt and Israel had accepted the proposal of General Burns to set up observation points on both sides of the Gaza Strip demarcation line, which would be manned by U.N. observers, and also for mobile patrols by observers whose aim was to inspect the Israel-Egypt border. Syria and Israel had agreed in principle to a relaxation of tension on their common border and to avoid incidents in the Lake Tiberias region.

Apart from armistice matters the report deals with topics raised during his talks. Israel had raised the issue of freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. Hammarskjöld had contended that the subject exceeded the powers granted him by the Security Council resolution, but the report contained a paragraph stating that this subject was deserving of debate in light of the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951 which stated that the blockade was incompatible with the armistice regime, which had put an end to a state in which Egypt could avail itself of belligerent rights.

Another subject included in the report was the resumption of the work which Israel had begun for the diversion of the Jordan channel south of the

Benot Yaaqov bridge. Hammarskjöld stated that only the Security Council was authorised to interpret its 27 October 1953 resolution concerning the work in the Jordan channel (See Volume 8, No. 475, Editorial Note) and that, whatever the legal argument in this regard might be, it was obligatory on each side, in the context of the efforts to reduce tension, to avoid any action that might create additional tension.

(See Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council Pursuant to the Council's Resolution of 4 April 1956 on the Palestine Question, U.N. Document S/3596; analysis of the report, regarding its positive and negative aspects from Israel's standpoint, see No. 243.)

241. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 9 May 1956

Coded Tel. IW989; Outg: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between the minister of foreign affairs and White from the United States embassy, dealing with the issue of Israel's work in the Jordan river channel. The minister said that Hammarskjöld's position was that only the Security Council was entitled to interpret the resolution concerning the resumption of work.[1] Israel, on the other hand, believes that an interested state is entitled to interpret it as it understands it, so long as there is no clear interpretation on the part of the Council. Already two years ago the Council had decided on an urgent examination of the question,[2] the examination had been concluded and since then the Council had not dealt with the matter. Israel was therefore entitled to resume the work, and had refrained from doing so only after its promise to Johnston, who had promised to achieve an overall agreement on the division of the water and had argued that the resumption of the work would thwart his efforts. In the meantime Johnston had made no progress, and time was pressing.[3] For some weeks past Israel had been hearing that the State Department intended to propose a plan, and still there was no news. He wished to know what the State Department's position was.[4]

White replied that the matter was currently under discussion in the Department. He himself had suggested that Jordan and Israel should begin the work, Jordan in the Yarmuk and Israel in the Jordan, whilst maintaining the water quotas suggested by Johnston. There was no answer yet. The minister replied that Israel would willingly agree to this suggestion. He asked: if the

Arabs rejected this, would the United States support the resumption of the work in the Jordan channel in the framework of the Johnston quotas?

Notes

1. See Editorial Note above. These remarks were made in a meeting with Israeli representatives on 20 April and recorded in the report on p. 28.
2. The examination was made in March 1954 by the water experts Dixon and Eysvoogel, and conveyed to the parties. For the conclusions of the examination see Vol. 9, No. 241 and n.1 there.
3. In Hammarskjöld's notes (see n. 1 above) the following slightly different version appears:

   Concerning Banat Yakoub, I declared to Mr. Ben-Gurion that my stand with the Syrians would be as follows:

   The cease-fire obligation (in Syrian Agreement under Article III, 2 and 3) is an undisputed obligation which is not cancelled through non-compliance by the other Party with any other clause of the Armistice Agreement.

   Thus, use of force can never be justified by Israeli action in what the Syrians consider to be the contravention of their legal rights in the case of Banat Yakoub.
4. This clause was amended by Sharett as follows:

   Time is pressing and the government cannot delay the issue. It has to know what is confronting it. For weeks already we have been hearing from the State Department that they intend submitting proposals to us. We are interested in acting as far as possible in coordination with the United States, and therefore we have delayed our decision but we cannot wait for an unlimited time, and we must obtain clarification of the situation without further delay.

   (See Sharett to the embassy in Washington, Tel. 996, 12 May 1956, 130.02/2455/5.)

242. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 10 May 1956

Coded Tel. 794; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on his conversation with Pineau[1] following the meeting of the foreign ministers of the three Western powers in Paris.[2]

The three had come to the conclusion that the change in Moscow's position[3] made it possible to deal with the Middle East in the framework of the Security Council. The Tripartite Declaration was not abrogated, but was applicable only for urgent action in an emergency, whereas the fundamental problems would be passed to the U.N. The possibility of a general embargo of the Middle East had been discussed, but the conclusion was that this was

impossible because of the British opposition to halting the supply of arms to the member states of the Baghdad Pact.

It had been agreed from now on to submit all shipments of arms to the Middle East for approval by the Near East Arms Coordination Committee – NEACC.[4] This committee would act rapidly and would approve mainly arms of a defensive nature to Israel. France would supply the 12 Mystères IV that had been promised and also a dozen Mystères II or Ouragans and the remaining requests would be submitted to the committee. According to him, there had not been any change in Dulles' basic position regarding the supply of arms. He was convinced that the solution was not in an arms race. In any event, Dulles had contacted Pearson about the 24 F-86 planes.

After this they had spoken about Mollet's and his forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union.[5] Pineau promised to explain to the Russians the importance of Israel's security for the peace of the region. He was sure that the Soviet Union was not interested in war and this was the reason for their recent statement on 17 April. Tsur told him of Israel's hesitation about asking the Russians for arms. He replied that he would be very pleased if the Russians supplied arms to Israel even if only in a symbolic quantity. He promised to verify their position on this issue. He promised to report to Tsur after his return from Moscow.[9]

Notes

1. In instructions sent to Tsur in advance of the meeting, it said among other things that the arms race in the Middle East was raising grave security problems for Israel because of the continuing Arab hostility towards it and the encouragement of the imperialist aspirations of the Arab states with Egypt at their head (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Tsur, Tel. 43, 9 May 1956, 130.09/2347/1). In a further telegram, Tsur was asked to discuss the supply of Mystère planes to Israel, but not to mention the second dozen, whose supply was ensured, but to focus on the request for 60 planes overall (See Najar to Tsur, Tel. 43, 9 May 1956, 130/09/2450/1).
2. The foreign ministers of the United States, Britain and France met in Paris on 6 May after the NATO Conference to discuss Middle East affairs. For a detailed report on these talks see *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XV, No. 336, pp. 615-619.
3. The Soviet declaration regarding the Middle East, see No. 205.
4. Near East Arms Coordinating Committee – See No. 4, n. 2.
5. The French Prime Minister Mollet, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pineau, visited the Soviet Union on 15-20 May 1956.
6. Tsur recommended mainly that the French should demand from the Soviets to restore the arms balance in the Middle East, including halting Soviet arms shipments to the Arab states and bolstering Israel's defensive capacity (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 727, 26 April 1956, 130.09/2346/5). Sharett responded (his telegram to Tsur, No. 45, 9 May 1956, 130.09/2347/1) that he agreed with most of Tsur's suggestions, and he also asked to obtain the French response to the Czech-Syrian arms deal, and in

addition "to check cautiously" their reaction in the event of an Israeli request to the Soviet Union for the supply of arms.

7. See No. 214, n. 4.
8. In the Soviet Army journal *The Red Star* of 5 May 1956 there appeared an article according to which the Zionist Congress, "which is in fact under the ministerial supervision of the American Foreign Ministry," had turned into a platform for fomenting war hysteria in Israel. Ben-Gurion had announced to the Congress that peace with the Arabs was impossible. The article also said that Israel had doubled its military budget and was making large arms purchases in the Western countries.
9. See No. 289.
10. Sharett responded by asking if the impression was correct that "Pineau was cold and reserved." He also asked what the meaning was of the announcement that the second shipment of Mystère planes to Israel was the last – was it the last in the framework of "off-shore procurement" or the last of all? (See Sharett to Tsur, Tel. 58, 14 May 1956, 130.09/2347/1). Tsur replied that the conversation had been rushed since, due to an error, Bourguiba had been invited for a conversation at the same time. His impression was that Pineau had lost much of the power of decision he had originally possessed because of the worsening situation in Algeria and his desperate efforts not to provoke Egypt and because of the failure of his attempts to force the United States to participate in the supply of arms (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 818, 15 May 1954, 130.09/2346/5).

243. M. Kidron (New York) to Y. Tekoah. 11 May 1956

Coded Tel. 230; Inc.: 130.02/2448/4

Summary

Kidron makes an initial assessment of the secretary-general's report on his visit to Israel.[1] He enumerates the negative and positive points from Israel's standpoint. It turns out that on points of principle the secretary-general as a rule supports the Israeli position, whereas on details he tends to criticise it. The main conclusion arising from the report is that it is forbidden to force solutions on the sides but that they must be helped to increase mutual trust and prove their desire for peace.

Notes

1. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
2. In pp. 24-25 of the report to the Security Council (ibid.) Hammarskjöld suggested setting up two observation posts on the north-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias in the territory under Syrian control, and one in the territory under Israeli control. These posts would be manned by U.N. observers; the observers would be able to proceed from the observation posts by U.N. boat to places where their presence would be required.

3. This resolution, numbered S/1376II, ratifies the armistice agreements and transfers the authority for supervision and enforcement from the U.N. mediator to the chief of staff of the U.N. Observer Organization and his staff.
4. Hammarskjöld showed Kidron the draft of his report. Kidron asked that a clause be omitted regarding Benot Yaaqov which said that all the states concerned, whilst preserving their legal rights, must avoid increasing the tension over the resumption of the work. Kidron argued that this clause was liable to affect adversely the negotiations which Israel was conducting with the Export-Import Bank for obtaining a loan to finance the work. Hammarskjöld responded angrily that he had not been informed about these negotiations when he visited Jerusalem. Nevertheless he mitigated his text. (See Kidron to Sharett, X225, 4 May 1956, 130.09/2332/14).
5. The Burns memorandum on Syrian complaints about Israeli violations of Article V of the armistice agreement was appended to the Hammarskjöld report as Appendix VII. The Syrians claimed that Israel had introduced into the demilitarized zone forces of border police, whilst Article V only allowed the stationing there of "locally recruited civilian police." Israel was also accused of operating military and semi-military forces in the demilitarized zone, and of not giving permission to the residents of the Arab villages in the demilitarized zone who had fled their homes to return, despite what was stated in Article V.

244. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 11 May 1956

Coded Tel. 256; Inc.: 130.09/2311/8

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation between the directors of the Export-Import Bank and a delegation from the State Department, a report given to him indirectly.[1] In the discussion Rountree of the State Department said that the plan presented by Israel was meritorious and the Department requested that the Bank proceed to study it without delay. The representatives of the Bank pressed to be told what the position of the State Department was from a political standpoint. Rountree said that this depended on another problem which was currently under discussion, and intimated that this concerned the postponement of the work in the Jordan channel. It was therefore desirable that the economic and fiscal examination should be conducted rapidly so that the moment that this obstacle was removed it would be possible to act. Lawson, who was present at the conversation, said that Israel was entitled to its share of the Jordan waters and only the United States could help it to receive this by peaceful means.[2]

Notes

1. In the conversation Hoover said that the plan seemed sound to him and recalled the sympathetic attitude of the secretary of state (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 255, 11 May 1956, 130.09/2311/8).
2. For Sharett's response, see No. 249.

245. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to F. E. Shinnar (Cologne). 11 May 1956

Coded Tel. 766; Outg: 130.10/2539/4

Summary

Following a telegram from Shinnar,[1] Sharett instructs him that if he encounters a tendency to postpone the arrival of the German trade-consular mission to Israel he should not argue or ask for favours, but point out the responsibility that they would be taking on themselves for the future of relations and then terminate the conversation.[2]

Notes

1. Shinnar cabled that he understood that there was concern in Germany over the dispatch of a trade-consular delegation to Israel which might induce the Arabs to recognise East Germany (See Shinnar to Sharett, 7 May 1956, 130.10/2539/4).
2. In a telegram the West European Division added that they must stress the gravity of the fact that Germany was displaying reservations towards Israel at the same time as it was strengthening political and economic ties with the Arab states. Germany's strengthening of ties with the Arab states at the present stage actually calls for coming closer to Israel. Only this step will prove to the Arabs and the Jews that Germany is not taking sides in the Arab-Israel conflict (See West European Division to the Israel mission in Cologne, Tel. 765, 10 May 1956, 130.10/2539/4; See also No. 247).

246. D. Lewin [Jerusalem] to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 11 May 1956

Orig.: 130.14/2561/7

Summary

Lewin writes that the detailed plan for Israeli activity in Asia which had been approved by the ministry had been shelved.[1] Israel's situation in this continent, especially after the Bandung Conference,[2] was not good. This situation demanded a comprehensive information campaign, but Israel had been content with a few routine actions whereas the Arabs had intensified their activities. The weakening of Israel's position in Asia represented a grave danger during the discussions of the U.N. Assembly. "Bandung" had become a significant concept in international politics. Only if Israel began a vigorous and wide-ranging campaign was there a chance of winning greater support than in the past year. Israel's weakness in Asia impacted also on its overall international status. He concludes by saying that if the minister convened a further consultation on this issue it would be necessary to add to the plan that had already been put forward.[4]

Notes

1. From a memorandum of Ben-Horin to Shek of 2 May 1956 it emerges that the Asia Division had "at the time" submitted to Sharett a proposal for a special one-time budget to cover information requirements in Asia. The minister asserted that they should try to obtain part of the sum from the regular ministry budget, but this did not succeed. Ben-Horin noted that "our current helplessness from the budgetary standpoint is more dangerous than ever, in light of the admission of additional Asian states to the U.N." (Memorandum in File 130.02/2415/3).
2. See No. 209, n. 6.
3. The list is in File 130.02/2415/31, but was not given here.
4 The consultation took place at the beginning of July 1956. See No. 328.
5. The central point of Marshall's remarks was that there was no value in local honorary consuls of Israel in Asian states, and that professional diplomats of stature had to be sent there (130.02/2415/31).

247. F. E. Shinnar (Cologne) to M. Sharett. 14 May 1956

Draft telegram; Inc.: 93.43/304/6

Summary

Shinnar reports that he had met with Hallstein who informed him that after consultation with Adenauer and Brentano, Germany wished to postpone temporarily the dispatch of the trade-consular delegation to Israel.[1] This was due to the Soviet intervention in the Middle East. Under these circumstances they could not give the Russians another card for increasing their influence in the region, and give them the opportunity to use the Arabs as a tool in their game whose aim was to drive a wedge between the Powers on the issue of German reunification. He hoped that Israel would understand their situation, and assured him that there had not been any change at all in their position regarding Israel. He added that in light of this situation it would be preferable to establish relations when the appropriate opportunity presented itself, and then it would not be necessary to dispatch the delegation.

Shinnar said that the statement should be seen as a violation of a promise. Israel had not asked for and did not seek favours, and by this statement Germany was taking full responsibility for the future of their relations. Shinnar added that Hallstein had not even taken a position concerning the two questions of the date of the dispatch of the delegation and the date for establishing diplomatic relations. Hallstein replied that he had not mentioned dates in order to avoid promising something that depended on the way things developed in the central problem he had mentioned.

Shinnar recommended, in the light of the promise to establish diplomatic relations at the first opportunity, to be satisfied now with a moderate reaction, namely with the statement he had issued according to the instructions he had received, and not to embark upon an information and publicity campaign. Such a campaign did not reflect credit on Israel and was liable to have an adverse effect on implementation of the reparations agreement. His impression was that a proposal for diplomatic relations would come within the next six months. He requests instructions.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 150.
2. No. 205.
3. No. 245.

4. A full report on the conversation, dated 17 May 1956, in File 130.02/2413/3. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' response (Ilsar to Shinnar, 23 May 1956, 93.43/304/4) it said that Shinnar's telegram had caused great embarrassment. A consultation had been held and a memorandum about this had also been prepared (See No. 259). In the wake of all of this Sharett sent instructions to all Israeli missions to cool relations with German representatives (See No. 264).

248. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett.[1] 15 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA269; Outg.: 93.01/2212/15

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Heeney, the Canadian ambassador in Washington. Eban informed him about what he had been told in the State Department and in Paris[2] and explained the importance of the purchase of the F-86 planes from Canada. Heeney told him that he had been informed that the United States had released a number of items to Israel, including some planes.[3] It would have made things easier for Canada had the Americans released some more important items, although this also had some symbolic value. After Pearson's conversation with Dulles[4] they understood better the problems of the United States regarding the supply of arms to Israel. Before this conversation it had not been possible to contemplate the supply of Canadian planes to Israel. Now the request was under serious discussion. But even now in Canadian terms the matter was quite daring.

Eban's impression was that the Canadian anger with the United States had now diminished.

Notes

1. Also sent to Comay in Ottawa.
2. See Nos. 229, 242.
3. See No. 236.
4. See No. 166.
5. On Israel's arms requests from Britain see No. 210.

249. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban. 15 May 1956

Coded Tel.; Outg.: 130.09/2311/6

Summary

In answer to Eban's telegrams[1] Sharett had held a consultation and it had been decided that an absolute distinction must be drawn between the loan from the Export-Import Bank and the question of the resumption of work in the Jordan channel. If the State Department accompanied approval of the loan with a condition about the resumption of the work, they must examine precisely what its demand was and then react accordingly. Israel must not take part in drafting the phasing plan as this would give the impression of agreement in principle to the plan. In order to obtain the best proposals from the State Department Israel must keep them under the pressure of its readiness to resume the work this season in accordance with his conversation with White.[2] He also inquires about the need for Wiener's trip to the United States.

Notes

1. See No. 244 and n. 1 there.
2. See No. 241.

250. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett and the West European Division. 15 May 1956

Coded Tel. 824; Inc.: 130.02/2480/1

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with de Margerie. He asked him about his impression of the meeting on 5 May of the foreign ministers of the Three Powers and especially for an assessment of Dulles' attitude to Nasser.[1] De Margerie replied that Dulles is not willing to see in Nasser a hostile force, and he considers his regime as the best that Egypt can hope for at present. With regard to arms and the balance of power, Dulles' position is that the principle of balance must be preserved and because of that he agreed to sell arms to Israel, but did not budge from his position that this sale should not be carried out by the United States. Dulles had added that in the event of

an attack on Israel the United States would intervene militarily, and it was sufficient for Egypt to know that such an intervention could be expected.

Tsur asked about the meaning of the French statement that the second shipment of Mystères 4 was the last. De Margerie replied that it should be taken literally, that France would not sell more planes to Israel unless Canada would also do so. The statement was intended to force the United States to supply planes.

They also spoke about the widespread view in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Israel enjoyed a military superiority over the Arabs. De Margerie explained that this view was based on the technological problems the Arabs had with the maintenance of the large quantities of arms they had received.

Notes

1. See No. 242.
2. The text of the French announcement was not found. According to Bendor's report this statement referred to the second and last release of Mystère 4 planes (See Bendor to Sharett, Tel. 839, 21 May 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

251. M. Avidan (Vienna) to the East European Division. 15 May 1956

Coded Tel.; Inc.: 130.11/2502/12

Summary

Avidan replies to a question from the division concerning immigration from Poland.[1] The source he was basing himself on was reliable, and only in the future would the meaning of the expression "in principle" in the Polish decision become clear. In his opinion there would not be mass immigration, but the rate would increase. Israel's role was to encourage the submission of additional requests for immigration. He would inform them of further developments.[2]

Notes

1. On 8 May Avidan reported from Poland that he had learned from a reliable source that an inter-ministerial committee headed by the deputy minister of foreign affairs had decided "in principle" to respond positively to every request for immigration to Israel, even outside the family reunification framework. In the East European

Division they questioned the reliability of the source and asked to know the meaning of "in principle" (See Avidan to the East European Division, Tel. 495, 8 May 1956, 130.09/2306/10; the East European Division to Avidan (in Vienna), Tel. 856, 10 May 1956, 130.09/2305/1).

2. The issue of immigration from Poland was raised on 8 June with the Polish deputy minister of foreign affairs by the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eytan, who was on a working visit to Warsaw at the time (See No. 284).

252. M. Kidron (New York) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 17 May 1956

Coded Tel. 241; Inc.: 130.02/2404/4

Summary

Kidron reports on his and Eban's conversation with Hammarskjöld. The latter persisted in his refusal to return to the Middle East without an explicit invitation from the governments of the region for the following reasons: if he appeared again to discuss all the important questions, such as water, refugees and borders, he would become a nuisance and this would undermine the secretary-general's prestige. As to the problems that had preceded the major questions, such as the restoration of the armistice agreements to their original state, the removal of forces from Sinai and the implementation of Articles VII and VIII, his presence was not essential. He did not wish to be a tool of internal American politics.

However he also had a deadline, which was the month of July, when he would be issuing his report to the Assembly, or the date of the convening of the Assembly. He was not interested in a Palestine debate in the Assembly and therefore wished to make progress before then.

The Security Council would convene the following week.[1] He had succeeded in obtaining agreement for a draft resolution approving the report and calling upon the secretary-general to place his good offices at the disposal of the sides.

Notes

1. The Security Council Session to debate the Hammarskjöld report began on 29 May 1956 (See No. 217).
2. See No. 244.

253. M. Comay (Ottawa) to M. Sharett. 18 May 1956

Coded Tel.; Outg: 93.01/2212/15

Summary

Comay refers to Sharett's telegram regarding the supply of F-86 planes.[1] He states that a week previously he had arranged for the Canadians themselves to contact Washington in order to clarify what they were releasing there, and he knew that they had received details from the State Department. The current situation in Ottawa was that the issue now depended on internal Canadian considerations more than the arms situation in the Middle East.[2] To Pearson, with whom he had talked, it was clear that the release of the planes was compatible with Western policy and Hammarskjöld's activity, but his government was afraid of involvement in the Middle East turmoil at a time when Canada had no direct interest in doing so. Pearson would try to influence the other members of the cabinet and the prime minister. Comay would raise the issue again in his next conversation with Pearson.[4] In the meantime he was not allowing the Zionist leadership to intervene since he feared that such an intervention could be more harmful than effective.

Notes

1. Sharett reported on the talks of the foreign ministers of the three Western Powers in Paris on the subject of the balance of power in the Middle East. It was acknowledged there that a gap existed between Israel and the Arab states and that it was necessary to correct this in order to deter aggression. Acting on the information received from Pineau, Dulles asked Pearson to supply 24 F-86 planes to Israel (See Sharett to Comay, Tel. 148, 17 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
2. Comay said that the subject had been discussed at a meeting of the Canadian cabinet but that no decision had been reached. He added that they must remain patient, and that the decision maker was the prime minister (See Comay to Sharett, Tel. 183, 17 May 1956, 93.01/2217/15).
3. Apparently the Minister of Trade, Clarence D. Howe.
4. In a conversation on 21 May Pearson said that that very morning he had talked with the prime minister who was disturbed by the possibility that Canada would "take a sensational step" which would elicit headlines liable to lead to new Soviet arms deals (See Comay to Sharett, Tel.186, 21 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1).

254. Meeting: M. Bartur – G.I. Zoubkov (Jerusalem, 18 May 1956)

Copy: 130.11/2507/8

Summary

Bartur reports on a conversation with the Soviet economic adviser, Zoubkov. Bartur raised the question of the signing of a trade agreement between the two states that would promote trade between them. He said that Israel had been trying for the past two years to bring about the signing of such an agreement and had met with evasive answers, at a time when the U.S.S.R. had signed such agreements with several nations in the region, such as Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Zoubkov replied that he would forward Israel's request to Moscow. He complained that Israel was refusing to increase the quota of import of books from the Soviet Union in return for local currency, at a time when the import of books from the United States was proceeding at a far greater rate. Bartur replied that Israel demanded reciprocity, and if the Soviet Union would allow the export of books from Israel, Israel would be prepared to increase the quota. He suggested an arrangement whereby Israel would send a letter and suggest increasing the quota immediately, whilst pointing out that it expected the Soviets to buy and distribute Hebrew books and records. Zoubkov replied that the formula seemed reasonable to him, he would convey it to Moscow, and he saw a chance of realizing Israel's hope.

Bartur raised the issue of the supply of Soviet arms to the Middle East. Zoubkov replied that the arms were not intended against Israel but to protect the independence of the states of the region. The Soviet Union was a world power and could not allow itself to abdicate influence in any part of the world including the Middle East. He argued that the Western states were also supplying arms and why was Israel not protesting against this supply, as it was doing in the case of Soviet arms? He also reiterated the claim that Israel's army enjoyed technical superiority over the armies of the Arab states. He mentioned Khrushchev's proposal of an embargo.[2] Bartur replied with the usual answers. Regarding the embargo, he recalled that Ben-Gurion, even prior to Khrushchev's declaration, had announced Israel's agreement to ending the arms race in the region on condition that the gap that had been created between the sides was corrected.

Notes

1. In the conversation Bartur suggested expanding trade relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, and the Soviet minister promised to consider the matter (See Bartur to the embassy in Moscow, Tel. 967, 11 April 1956, 130.09/2326/5).
   According to agreements signed between Israel and the Soviet Union in December 1953 and January 1954, the Soviets sold Israel crude oil and heating fuel and bought citrus fruit and bananas. Israel was not satisfied with this and aspired to expand its trade relations with the U.S.S.R. by means of the signing of trade and payment agreements, but met with an evasive response (See Bartur's briefing for Eytan prior to his tour of Eastern Europe, 17 May 1956, 130.02/2415/33).
2. At a press conference on 28 April 1956, at the end of his visit to London, Khrushchev declared that the U.S.S.R. would welcome an international undertaking, inside or outside the framework of the U.N., with regard to the halting of arms shipments to the Middle Eastern countries.
3. On 23 May 1956 Avidar handed a letter to the Soviet deputy minister of foreign affairs containing a proposal to sign trade and payment agreements which could serve as an instrument for expanding trade between the two states. The deputy minister said that he felt personally that the volume of trade was quite satisfactory. He promised to convey the letter to the minister (See Chelouche to the East European Division, the Economic Department, 24 May 1956, 130.11/2512/1). A reply to this letter was given in July 1956 – See No. 334.

255. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 18 May 1956

Coded Tel. 174; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

Avidar reports on the Shavuot (Pentecost) festival prayers. The synagogue was full and the contact between himself and the worshippers had been even greater than at Passover. In spite of the cool response to the rabbi's announcement,[1] Avidar believed that it should be seen as an achievement both in practical and psychological terms. The yeshiva and the kosher restaurant would facilitate contact between groups of Jews and would encourage additional demands.

Note

1. The chief rabbi of Moscow, Rabbi Shlomo Schliefer, announced in his festival address the opening of an institute for the training of rabbis, ritual slaughterers etc. and the agreement of the authorities for the opening of an official state shop for the sale of kosher meat and allotting room for a kosher restaurant (See Avidar to the East European Division and to Nativ, Tel. 175, 18 May 1956, 130.09/2326/7).

256. M. Fischer (Ankara) to the West European Division. 18 May 1956

Copy: 130.02/2410/12

Summary

Fischer reports on his conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Ardalan that took place in the course of the reception for the Shah and his retinue in Ankara.[2] Fischer began by asking why there were no diplomatic relations between the states. The minister replied that the severing of relations was temporary and derived from the internal situation in Iran, where Moslem fundamentalism was strong.[4] At this point the minister asked why Israel was opposed to the Baghdad Pact, opposition that prevented the strengthening of the pact by the inclusion of the United States. Fischer replied that the pact, which was intended to be an anti-Soviet pact, had taken on an anti-Israel hue by the exchange of letters between Turkey and Iraq.[6] This exchange of letters had led to an inter-Arab rivalry to see who could be the more hostile to Israel, had increased tension in the region and among other things had led to Soviet support for Egypt. Ardalan added that he would be very happy if he could inform the Americans that Israel was not opposed to their joining the Baghdad Pact. Fischer replied that he did not have the authority to say that, but would convey the question to his government.[8] Ardalan went on to say that the government of Iran was essentially well disposed towards Israel and that after they succeeded in strengthening the Baghdad Pact Israel would also obtain satisfaction in the sphere of relations.

Notes

1. The first part of the letter, which reports on various meetings of the Iranian delegation in Turkey, was omitted by the editors.
2. Fischer's intention, with the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was to exploit the Shah's visit to Ankara for a conversation with him about Iran-Israel relations, but the Iranians decided to have Fischer meet with the minister of foreign affairs, Ali Ardalan.
3. Fischer was a member of the Israeli delegation to the Ninth Session of the U.N. General Assembly (September-December 1954).
4. Iran closed its representation in Israel in July 1951, on the grounds of budgetary problems. Nonetheless, the de facto recognition which Iran accorded Israel in March 1950 was not rescinded (See Vol. 6, No. 268, n. 3).
5. A name for the Moslem clergy.
6. Following the mutual cooperation treaty between Turkey and Iraq, which was signed on 24 February 1955 and was known after other states joined as the Baghdad Pact, on the same day letters were exchanged between the prime ministers of Iraq and Turkey

in which they undertook to cooperate for the implementation of the U.N. resolutions on Palestine.

7. See, for example, No. 215 and n. 7 there.
8. Fischer gave an account to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was informed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Fischer, Tel. 403, 21 May 1956, 130.02/2452/1) that there was no change in Israel's position regarding the Baghdad Pact, as Sharett had emphasised in his Knesset speech (See No. 3) and in the Eban memorandum to the State Department prior to the Eisenhower-Eden talks (See No. 60).
9. The conversation took place in January 1955.
10. Several paragraphs concerning the Shah's travels and meetings were omitted by the editors.

257. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 20 May 1956

Coded Tel. 180; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

Avidar reports on a meeting with Bulganin and Molotov that took place in the course of a reception at the French embassy. Bulganin came over to Avidar on his initiative and said that he believed that Israel wanted peace. When Avidar replied that Egypt declared itself to be in a state of war with Israel despite the fact that the Security Council had decided otherwise,[2] he did not react. Avidar added that if the Powers were concerned about peace in the region they ought to influence the side refusing to make peace and avoid the creation of conditions that encouraged them. After this Molotov turned to him and said that he hoped that the relaxation of tension in the region would make possible continued action to bring about more significant reduction in tension.

Notes

1. See No. 225.
2. This statement was made in the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951 concerning freedom of passage in the Suez Canal, see Vol. 6, Editorial Note on pp. 593-594.
3. A Yugoslav parliamentary delegation visited Israel, at the invitation of the Knesset, in May 1956.
4. See No. 176.

258. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 21 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA281; Outg.: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Eban refers to Sharett's telegram concerning the possibility that Israel would turn to the U.S.S.R. with a request to purchase arms.[1] He points out that purchasing arms from the Soviets would harm the chances of procurement from the United States and its allies, particularly Canada. Moreover, it was doubtful whether United States Jewry would wish to finance the purchase of these arms as long there was a chance of purchasing arms from non-Communist states, especially after it had been explained to them that the chances of purchasing in the West were now already greater than Israel's financial strength.

Notes

1. In this telegram Sharett quoted from Pineau's remarks to Tsur that the supply of any Soviet arms to Israel would make things easier for France (see No. 242), and he recalled that Dulles' main argument for denying American arms to Israel was the fact that the Soviet Union was supplying arms only to the Arabs, and concluded that Israel had its own reasons for not seeking the Soviet Union's help. However Israel's account with the West meant there was less and less justification not to approach the U.S.S.R. (See Sharett to Eban, Tel. 12, 20 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1).
2. The joint United States, Britain and France committee for coordination of the supply of arms to the Middle East – see No. 1, n. 2.

259. Y. Ilsar (Jerusalem) to the Director of the West European Division. 22 May 1956

Orig.: 130.10/2539/4

Summary

Ilsar refers to a consultation that had taken place on 17 May regarding Israel-German relations[1] and asserts that they must analyse the relations between the two states in light of this consultation.

a. The development of relations between the two states before German sovereignty was achieved in 1955 was determined by Israel's wish to ensure the unhindered implementation of reparations and from a certain pressure by Germany for the normalisation of relations with it. Since the assumption

of sovereignty a change had taken place. Germany had cancelled the planned dispatch of a trade mission to Israel, and announced that it was hoping in the future to establish full relations without any intermediate stage. The reason was the adoption of the Hallstein doctrine which states that Germany will break off relations with any state which recognises East Germany. This rule gives the Arabs bargaining power and invites pressure on Germany. Although Germany continued to declare that it was interested in establishing relations with Israel and the reparations agreement was also proceeding normally, Arab pressure had increased as well as that of the Germans with interests in the Arab states.

Israel's main goals in Germany were to ensure the implementation of the reparations agreement and to thwart Arab influence. Therefore he suggests not raising the problem of diplomatic relations, whose solution would in any case come when the West adopted clearer positions regarding the reunification of Germany and towards the Arab states. In the meantime they must intensify political activity in Germany where there was interest and many opportunities.

Notes

1. In this consultation Sharett announced that he had considered responding to the crisis in Israel-German relations by freezing them. He was considering instructing the Israeli representatives in the world not to meet with their German counterparts, and not to reply to their invitations. He was also thinking of stopping inviting guests from Germany. A telegram on this issue had been prepared for the missions abroad, but was not sent because of further hesitation. Meanwhile this memorandum of Ilsar had been sent to Sharett, and another telegram to the missions was drafted – See No. 264.
2. In 1955.
3. No. 150.
4. See No. 247.

260. M. Kidron (New York) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 23 May 1956

Coded Tel. 256; Outg.: 130.09/2332/14

Summary

Kidron reports on a conversation with Sobolev from the Soviet delegation to the Security Council. Kidron reviewed the secretary-general's mission and

noted in particular the importance which Israel attached to the secretary-general's assertion that solutions must not be imposed on the sides but reached by agreement between them. Sobolev asked how Israel felt the Security Council should continue dealing with the issue. Kidron replied that it was desirable that the Security Council resolution should contain three principles: (a) emphasis that the task of the U.N. in dealing with the conflict was to seek to achieve a final agreement on the road to peace (b) emphasis on the fulfillment of all the commitments according to Article I in the armistice agreements and (c) repetition of the secretary-general's remarks that they must encourage the sides to find agreed solutions. Sobolev said that these ideas were close to those of his government, but he had not yet received final instructions. They were awaiting a Western initiative, but if this was slow in coming, he did not exclude the possibility that the Soviet Union would propose a draft resolution of its own.

Notes

1. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 225.
3. See No. 312, n. 2.
4. See No. 204 and n. 1 there.
5. Ben-Gurion made the following remarks whilst presenting his government in the Knesset on 2 November 1955: "In order to avoid the dangers expected in the uncontrolled situation currently prevailing, I am prepared to meet with the Egyptian prime minister and with each of the Arab rulers as soon as possible – for a mutual settlement, without preconditions" (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), the First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 233).

261. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 24 May 1956

Coded Tel. 82; Inc.: 130.09/2321/2

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Shuckburgh dealing with Middle Eastern issues and Israel-Britain relations.

Shuckburgh began by assessing the visit of the Soviet leaders.[1] The latter had repeated their opposition to the Baghdad Pact and pointed out that any state in the region that opposed the Pact would gain their support, and this was actually the reason for the aid to Egypt. They had described Israel as a tool of the West. Shuckburgh estimated that the rivalry with the Russians

in the region would continue. As to the Pact itself, Britain would continue with its efforts to draw the United States closer to active participation in it and to strengthen the Pact itself as much as it could. He saw the main axis of the Baghdad Pact in Iraq, and it was the cornerstone of British policy in the Middle East. Jordan was adopting a neutral position vis-à-vis the Baghdad Pact. The king, in spite of his youth and the many difficulties facing him, was fighting Jordan's battle with great courage almost alone. Samir al-Rifa'i had disappointed. The firing of Samir[5] had taken place against the background of his many conflicts with the king which were unconnected with policy. The most dangerous man in the Middle East was Nasser, who represented one of the main elements of instability in the region. He exploited regional problems to cement his status as the leader of Egypt. Lately his prestige had declined somewhat since he had been unable to take credit for any fresh dramatic success. The British see the Hammarskjöld mission as successful. The British were planning to submit to the Security Council a draft resolution, modest in content and wording, to sum up the secretary-general's mission. The aim was to enable the Russians to support it. In conclusion Shuckburgh noted that Britain's main aim was to bring about a relaxation of tension in the region and to maintain quiet along the borders, and only after that would it also be possible to explore more daring ideas regarding a final settlement in the region.

Elath points out that he had come mainly to listen, and therefore had not asked questions or made demands. With regard to arms he would meet with Kirkpatrick in the next few days.[6]

Notes

1. See No. 225.
2. See ibid.
3. Between 16-19 May 1956 there convened in Teheran the second annual conference of the Baghdad Pact. In the course of the conference the relationship between the Pact and the United States was strengthened: a delegation of American observers was present, and the United States was made an associate member of the economic committee and the anti-subversion committee at the conference. In addition the United States decided to open a liaison office with the Pact in Baghdad.
4. At the beginning of March 1956 there took place in Cairo a summit meeting of the heads of state of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Among other things it was decided to consider an attempt by Israel to resume work in the Jordan river channel as an hostile act, which would provoke in its wake an immediate response. In May 1956 the political conference of the Arab League convened in Damascus.
5. On 20 May 1956 the prime minister of Jordan, Samir al-Rifa'i, resigned. Two days later a new government, headed by Sa'id al-Mufti, was formed.
6. See No. 319.

262. A. Eshel (Jerusalem) to Y. Avidar (Moscow). 24 May 1956

Copy: 130.11/2497/2

Summary

Eshel writes about the Jews of the Soviet Union. The Soviet embassy in Washington had announced to two bodies of rabbis in the United States that it was prepared to permit them to visit in order to examine the condition of Soviet Jewry.[1] Israel was in touch with the delegations, and would see that they received a full briefing. In the meantime the French Socialist delegation[5] had met with the Soviet leaders. When they raised the question of emigration Mikoyan replied that the Soviet Union did not encourage emigration since Israel was a American capitalist den. Whoever requested to emigrate to Israel would receive an answer, but the Soviet Jews were not at all interested in immigration. Regarding cultural life, newspapers and theatre, all these institutions had dried up for lack of demand.

Notes

1. For details of the two delegations which visited the Soviet Union in summer 1956 see the letter from the consulate-general in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 May 1956, 130.11/2497/2. One delegation represented the New York Board of Rabbis, and was made up of the three streams of American Jewry, the second delegation was from the Rabbinical Council of America. On the visit of the delegations in the Soviet Union itself see Y. Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration*, pp. 116-9.
2. The World Jewish Congress responded affirmatively to the invitation of the Moscow community to send it a delegation whose members "would be tourists" with the aim of establishing relations with the Jewish communities in the Soviet Union (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Moscow, Tel. 57, 24 May 1956, 130.09/2326/5). At the beginning of June Nahum Goldmann declared at a press conference in Paris that the community's invitation was made with the knowledge of the Soviet authorities, and that this would represent a "turning point in the relations between Soviet Jewry and World Jewry." He added that he would be shortly announcing the date of the delegation's departure and that he would be participating in the delegation (See *Haaretz*, 8 June 1956). The visit of this delegation did not materialise.
3. Nehemia Levanon, director of "Bar."
4. The first letter concerning the rabbinical delegations – See note 1 above. The second letter was not found.
5. A delegation representing the French Socialist Party visited the Soviet Union in May 1956. It met with the Soviet leadership, and also raised the Jewish question. See

the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 195, 23 May 1956, 130.09/2326/7. See also Ro'i, ibid., pp. 107-108.

6. This telegram was not found.

263. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 27 May 1956

Orig.: 130.02/5936/57

Summary

Ben-Gurion sends Eban several comments and reflections on the Hammarskjöld report.[3]

He had been waiting for the report, even though he knew it would not contain any surprises, since he wanted to see if his impression of Hammarskjöld's conduct was correct. Regrettably he found that he had not been mistaken. When he had met Hammarskjöld for the first time on 24 January he had as a matter of fact made a good impression; pleasant speaking, courteous, frank. On his second visit, on the other hand, he had received an unfavourable impression.

In fact the start of the visit did not augur well. It began with a shower of messages from Cairo[6] and in one of them Hammarskjöld wrote that he was convinced that the Egyptian government believed that war must be avoided. This being so, the secretary-general felt that the question of war at the present was in the hands of Israel. Ben-Gurion protested and the affair ended with Hammarskjöld apologising.

In the discussions that were held differences of opinion arose in all areas. It turned out that he is very sharp-minded but lacking in intellectual honesty. He reduces his authority when this is required for the Arabs or harms Israel, and increases it when this is required to harm Israel or to assist the Arabs. He suppresses facts and arguments or censors them to defend the Arabs or to present Israel in an unfavourable light, ignores Security Council resolutions favouring Israel by arguing that they were not mentioned in the 4 April resolution on which his mission is based, while dredging up from oblivion those – if there is something in them deleterious to Israel – which also were not mentioned in the Security Council resolution. Ben-Gurion gives several examples of this behaviour. He points out that the question that he is wrestling with is whether to denounce Hammarskjöld's duplicity or to remain silent. He asks Eban for his opinion on this question.[25]

Notes

1. The telegram, of 27 May 1956, in File 130.02/2311/6.
2. Eban asked Ben-Gurion to come to the United States in order to assist the fundraising effort to finance Israel's arms procurement expenditure (See his telegram to Sharett, Tel. 282, 24 May 1954, 130.02/2311/8; See also No. 217).
3. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
4. On 29 May 1956 the Security Council began to debate the situation on Israel's borders following Hammarskjöld's report on his visit to the region – See No. 277.
5. On the meeting in January – See No. 56.
6. Refers to three messages of 12 April 1956 which Hammarskjöld sent to Ben-Gurion via the U.N.T.S.O. Headquarters in Jerusalem. In the first cable he announced that in his talks with Nasser and Fawzi he had received a promise that the Egyptian government, whilst reserving the right of self-defence in accordance with the U.N. Charter, reiterated its unconditional agreement to Article II(2) in the Armistice agreement (This article deals with the undertaking by the parties to avoid hostile acts along the borders) (See R.E. Hommel to Ben-Gurion, 12 April 1956, 130.02/2404/3). In the second message he announced that Egypt had agreed to move the patrols away from the border, and to issue directives forbidding the opening of fire across the border line and crossing it. Hammarskjöld asked Israel to confirm that instructions had been given to Israeli patrols not to approach the border, and to give explicit promise to observe the regulations in Article II(2) as Egypt had done (See R.E. Hommel to Ben-Gurion, 12 April 1956, 130.02/2448/3). In the third message Hammarskjöld responds to a message from Sharett, in which the latter reported the resumption of hostile acts by Egyptian gangs in Israeli territory (See Tekoah to the Israel Permanent Mission to the U.N., Tel. 135, 12 April 1956, 130.09/2331/19). Hammarsjköld expressed regret at the loss of life but was opposed to issuing a public statement in his name lest he add to the tension thereby (See F.X. Giacomaggi to Ben-Gurion, 12 April 1956, 130.02/2439/4).
7. Ben-Gurion's reply was conveyed by Tekoah (Hommel's letter, 13 April 1956, 130.02/2439/7).
8. The message was not found in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs files, and as mentioned above, it was apparently returned to its sender.
9. See Hammarskjöld (from Beirut) to Ben-Gurion, 15 April 1956, 130.02/2439/7.
10. See entry in Ben-Gurion's diary, 17 April 1956, Ben-Gurion Archive.
11. See No. 204.
12. See No. 11, n. 6.
13. Article I concerns the prohibition of the use of force and observance of the cease fire between Israel and Egypt. Articles VII and VIII deal with establishing the demilitarized zone in Nitzana and limiting the forces of the two sides in this region.
14. See No. 204, n. 5.
15. See Hammarskjöld report, U.N. Document S/3596, of 9 May 1956, pp. 28-29.
16. The Security Council resolution – See No. 179 (Editorial Note).
17. Ben-Gurion actually intends to say "letter for Nasser," namely a letter which will be useful for Hammarskjöld in his meeting with Nasser, and which will explain the official Israeli position regarding the linkage between the implementation of Article I in the Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement and Articles VII and VIII. See also Sharett's letter to Hammarskjöld of 2 May 1956 (in File 130.16/2947/12), which contains the draft of a letter which Hammarskjöld wrote and which Ben-Gurion signed after

amendments were introduced in it. The amended letter (dated 3 May 1956, in File 130.02/2448/4) was given to Hammarskjöld before his departure for Cairo, and as mentioned above was for his use during his conversation with Nasser.

18. See Ben-Gurion to Hammarskjöld, 3 May 1956, 130.02/2437/4.
19. Appendix V in the Hammarskjöld report.
20. The Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951 regarding the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal – see Vol. 6, Editorial Note on pp. 593-594.
21. Appendix VI in Hammarskjöld's report.
22. In the original mistakenly: "Egypt."
23. Appendices I and II in Hammarskjöld's report.
24. This apparently refers to the resolution adopted in March 1954 – See Vol. 9, No. 110.
25. Eban's reply was not found, but for his earlier response to the telegram he received containing a summary of Ben-Gurion's comments, see No. 270. See also Kidron's comments in a memorandum to Eban (15 June 1956, 93.03/3042/3). Sharett responded saying that Ben-Gurion's charges against Hammarskjöld were very serious but they must not be weakened by unfounded complaints. In the section dealing with Nitzana in the report Hammarskjöld did not demand Israel's evacuation of Nitzana. The text says that implementation of the articles regarding Nitzana (articles VII and VIII) "has to find its place in relation to other steps in fulfillment of the aims of the armistice agreement." Moreover, the secretary-general did not undertake to restore freedom of navigation in the Canal and not to see in the violation of this condition approval for Israel to return to Nitzana if it was evacuated. The wording in the report is as follows: I have specific assurances from both sides of their willingness to establish full compliance with Articles VII and VIII, within the framework of a full return to the state of affairs envisaged the Armistice Agreement. According to the form of this wording the secretary-general had fulfilled the promises he had given Israel during the talks and therefore he should not be accused of betraying his undertakings (See the minister of foreign affairs to the prime minister, 29 May 1956, 130.02/2436/8).

264. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 27 May 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 747; Outg: 130.09/2321/9

Summary

Sharett reports to the missions on the turn for the worse in relations with Germany[1,2] and instructs them to stop inviting German diplomats and also not to respond positively to their invitations. In addition, they should avoid everyday conversations and if there is no way of avoiding a handshake, to do so coldly. They must not initiate a conversation, and if asked, they must reply that Israel had gained the impression that Germany was not interested in advancing its relations with Israel. They must not enter into details but

only stress Israel's disappointment. They should also hint to loyal friends in the diplomatic corps about the change, so that they should approach the Germans and ask them what had happened between them and Israel. All of these things should be done unobtrusively and without publicity.[3]

Notes

1. See No. 150.
2. See Nos. 245, 247.
3. Eban hurriedly sent a telegram that the previous week he had talked with his German counterpart on this matter and saw that he was embarrassed. After some stammering he said that the Bonn Government was assailed by fears that Nasser would recognise East Germany (See his telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 303, 27 May 1956, 130.09/2311/8).

265. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Prague). 27 May 1956

Copy: 130.02/2415/33

Summary

Sharett briefs Eytan before his departure[1] for a tour of East European countries. He points out that his advantage over the permanent representatives derives not only from his eminent post but from being a rare guest, who comes for a special visit, and as such he can deal not only with everyday matters but can also extend the scope of relations and inquire into fundamental issues.

In the first place he must make an effort to dispel the distorted concepts that had taken hold in Eastern Europe with regard to Israel's international status and its foreign policy as if they are in thrall to the United States. One of the arguments they should use in this connection is to review Israel's efforts to establish relations with the People's Republic of China,[3] which until today had not been acceded to. Another issue is the forthcoming U.N. Assembly. He must prepare the way, especially in those states for whom this is their first appearance in the U.N.,[6] and review the Palestine problem as it was discussed in the organisation whilst stressing Israel's efforts to reach an agreed solution through direct negotiation. He must explain Israel's reaction to the Czech arms deal and the dangers that Israel sees in the heavy arming of Egypt and its expansionist aspirations. He must explain why Israel had not turned to the Soviet Union to receive arms, and point out that if the

Soviet Union's position had been different Israel would also have acted otherwise.

In matters concerning emigration and the Jews he should express satisfaction with the latest easing of restrictions on emigration[10] and also mention the situation of the Jews in these countries, whilst stressing that Israel considered these topics to be a touchstone of its relations with foreign countries.

Sharett deals at greater length with relations with Czechoslovakia. He should note Israel's satisfaction over the release of Oren,[11] but verify whether his release testified to the fact that this state has retracted the accusations it has levelled against Israel, its diplomatic representatives and its leaders.

Notes

1. In May 1956 Eytan went on a working visit to Eastern Europe. In addition to the Sharett briefing above, an economic briefing was prepared for him by Bartur (in File 130.02/2415/33).
2. See No. 283.
3. Israel recognised the People's Republic of China in January 1950 and was the seventh of the non-Communist states to do so.
4. An Israeli trade delegation visited China from 23 January to 24 February 1955. See Vol 9, No. 579; Zeev Sufot, "Israel's China policy, 1952-1992," in: *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The First Fifty Years*, Part One, pp. 582-584 [Hebrew].
5. On 16 May 1956.
6. Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, who were admitted into the U.N. in December 1955.
7. See No. 205.
8. See No. 225.
9. The Soviet declaration concerning the Middle East of April 1956 (No. 205) and the joint British-Soviet declaration on the Middle East (No. 225).
10. In 1956 the number of immigrants from Eastern Europe was greater than in the previous year: from the Soviet Union 753 as compared with 105; from Romania 714 as against 235; from Poland 3,635 as against 206; from Czechoslovakia 81 as against 40; from Hungary 999 as against 274. Only from Bulgaria was there a decrease, from 192 to 117 (See Y. Govrin, *Israel-Soviet Relations*, p.128). On the increased immigration from Poland see No. 251 and note 1 there.
11. On the Oren affair, his imprisonment, his testimony in the Slánský trial, and the exchanges of letters between the presidents of Israel and Czechoslovakia, see No. 79 and Vol. 7, Companion Volume, Editorial Note on p. 299.
12. In December 1952 the Israeli minister in Prague and Warsaw, A. Kubovy, was accused of behaviour unbefitting a diplomat and spying and was declared persona non grata. Avriel was the first Israeli minister in Prague and the accusations against him and against the Israeli leadership were raised during the Slánský trial.
13. In a report of May 27 1956 (in File 130.11/2513/5) which Oren sent after his release, four Prisoners of Zion are mentioned. According to Oren they were accused of engaging in illegal immigration and also giving bribes for this purpose. He explained that had they been given a fair trial they would have been given a fine or

imprisonment, but since they had been tried on charges of spying and treason, from this point of view they were innocent.

14. See No. 239, n.14.
15. Kaddar accompanied Oren on his way from Prague to Israel. He took this opportunity to meet with Sharett. No record of the conversation was found and it is not clear if in fact it took place.
16. The briefing to Eytan in No. 283. On Eytan's talks in Moscow, see No. 295.
17. One sentence, of a personal nature, was omitted by the editors.

266. A. Eban and M. Comay (Washington) to the United States Division. 28 May 1956

Coded Tel. WIA306; Inc.: 93.01/2212/15

Summary

Eban reports on the conclusions of a consultation regarding the purchase of planes in Canada. It will require a supreme effort to get Pearson to make decisive progress. Among other things they will pass on the prime minister's cable[1] and parallel action will take place in the United States.[3] Israel will apprise the State Department of the need to advance the purchase in Canada and to encourage the release of the F-86 planes in Italy. It was agreed also to go over the list of permits that had been released recently in the United States[5] and Canada in order to make sure that they were still effective and essential.

Notes

1. For the text of the message see in the telegram of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Ottawa, Tel. 152, 29 May 1956, 130.02/2456/1.
2. Comay met with Pearson on 31 May, and gave him Ben-Gurion's letter for him to give to the Canadian prime minister. He also handed him a memorandum summarising developments regarding Israel's request for the supply of planes from Canada (See a record of the conversation, 4 June 1956, in File 130.13/2598/12. The memorandum, bearing the date 31 May 1956, is in File 93.08/391/2).
3. Eban raised the subject of procurement in Canada in a conversation with Murphy on 30 May – See No. 272.
4. See No. 277.
5. See No. 236.

267. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 29 May 1956

Coded Tel.; Outg: 130.09/2311/6

Summary

The division reports on a conversation of Ambassador Lawson with Sharett. Sharett again reviewed the balance of forces in the region and Israel's urgent need for planes. Israel needed at least 72 planes in order to achieve deterrence. The American refusal to sell directly left three possible sources: Canada, Italy and France. Italy was ready to sell, but needed the approval of the State Department, which was not forthcoming. Canada was hesitating and the French announced that they would not be the sole supplier to Israel, and would only change their position if Canada and the United States would contribute as well. Sharett also talked about the financial burden bound up with the purchase and the need for American aid for the purchase of arms.

Lawson replied that while he was in the United States he had been impressed by the deep interest of all the people involved, from the president and the secretary of state down, in Israel's case. He had read telegrams containing a clear and strong demand by the secretary of state from Canada and France on the question of arms, and the impression he had gained as he left was that the chances were very good. In the course of the conversation he asked about the possibility of war in midsummer – Sharett replied that he did not wish to prophesy but he pointed out a number of worrying facts: Egyptian air superiority, Nasser's expansionist and provocative policy, and the fact that he was keeping a very close watch on Israel's arms purchases. Lawson asked if the timing of Nasser's recognition of the People's Republic of China[2] was connected with the supply that Israel had received. Sharett replied in the negative, noting that this indicated Nasser's consistent policy of showing no consideration for the West and his efforts to form a group of nations (India, China and Egypt) that would lead the Afro-Asian bloc.

Notes

1. The meeting of foreign ministers of the United States, Britain and France in Paris in May 1956 – See No. 242.
2. Egypt recognised the People's Republic of China on 16 May 1956.
3. An Egyptian journalist who visited Israel in April 1956. On the affair see Avner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 902, 16 April 1956, 130.09/2321/2.
4. Lt. Col. Ali Abu-Nuwar, who had pro-Nasserist tendencies, was appointed Jordanian chief of staff on 24 May 1956. On the occasion of his appointment he was raised to the rank of major-general.

268. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Prague). 29 May 1956

Coded Tel. 964; Outg: 130.09/2343/2

Summary

Sharett replies to Eytan's telegram[1] concerning Israel's place in the inter-bloc struggles. His general formula is that Israel's policy is independent and it did not intend to join one of the blocs. The reason for this formulation is that the term "non-dependence" is liable to mislead, since in fact Israel was dependent on external aid, financial and military, and the fact is that it was the West that had helped and was helping. At the same time, Israel is the only country in the region and in fact in the whole world that is not party to any pact. It is the only country in the region whose policy is peace and which maintains a democratic regime where clear-cut socialist development processes are active.

Notes

1. Eytan, who was at the time in Belgrade on a tour of East European states, asked, after talks with the minister, Levavi, if Israel could argue, at home and abroad, that it still favoured a policy of non-alignment. It was certainly possible to say that with all the reservations stemming from the Jewish problem and from the difference between Israel's internal regime and the regimes in Eastern Europe, Israel had no binding commitment either to the West or the East, and saw itself as wholly independent and bound only to the U.N. Charter (See his telegram to Sharett, 25 May 1956, 130.02/2408/9).
2. See No. 265.

269. Israel Ambassador in Moscow to the East European Division. 29 May 1956

Coded Tel. 218; Inc.: 130.09/2326/7

Summary

The ambassador responds to a telegram from the division[1] regarding the statement of the Soviet delegation to the U.N. The statement testifies to

the importance of world public opinion and therefore it is important that public opinion should continue to be a nuisance. They must ensure that serious newspapers, at opportune moments, should react to the statement, noting the positive aspect of the U.S.S.R.'s general concern for freedom of worship, but pointing out that there are restrictions on the Jews. There are no school textbooks in Hebrew, no national religious institution or organisation, no publishers of religious books, apart from prayer books, and not enough synagogues.

Note

1. Telegram from the East European Division to the Israel embassy in Moscow, 28 May 1956, 130.09/2326/5, forwarding a Tass News Agency report according to which the Soviet U.N. delegation had issued a statement that the laws in the Soviet Union guaranteed full freedom of religious worship. The Jewish community in Moscow conducted its affairs in an independent fashion and made matzos available on the Passover festival in 30 shops. "Many American delegations" and other visitors, including British Jews, had visited the synagogue and testified to the freedom of worship. The division requests attention to this report.

270. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division. 30 May 1956

Coded Tel. XA285; Inc.: 93.01/2212/15

Summary

Eban cables that he is waiting for Ben-Gurion's letter,[1] but his first impression was that the latter was exaggerating the gravity. The report did not demand that Israel leave Nitzana and in fact acquiesced to its being there under the existing circumstances. He did not see any benefit to be gained from arguing with the secretary-general in the Security Council now,[2] seeing that the debate was not on the report but on the question of what should be done after the cease-fire. He suggests a cursory reference to the report whilst expressing reservations over some points and focusing on the main aspect which is that the fundamental reasons for the tension remain intact.[3, 4]

Notes

1. No. 263, whose main points were cabled to Eban (TNW420, 30 May 1956, 130.02/2448/4).

2. In a telegram to Eban (see note 1 above) it said that the prime minister was deliberating over the question of whether to condemn Hammarskjöld's duplicity or not to react to the remarks. Eban was asked to give his opinion on the matter.
3. In a telegram to Sharett (WIA304, 27 May 1956, 93.01/2212/15) Eban proposed that in his speech in the Security Council debates he should describe the situation in the region as troubling and tense, since all the basic elements of the tension were still present: the continued undermining of the arms balance, the resumption of acts of hostility on the Jordanian border, concentrations of Egyptian forces remaining in Gaza and Sinai, threats being voiced against the State of Israel, the blockade continuing, and so forth.
4. Rafael sent instructions to Eban prior to the Security Council debate: he must stress that the secretary-general's report ignores the root of the situation and seeks to create the impression that it is possible to stabilise it only by observance of the cease-fire and reinforcing the U.N. apparatus. He must enumerate the fundamental causes of the situation, but without creating the impression that Israel was rejecting or cancelling what had been achieved. He must also point out the deteriorating situation on the Jordan border which seemed to indicate Egypt's decision to continue the minor war through a proxy (See Rafael to the Permanent Mission at the U.N., Tel. 246, 28 May 1956, 130.09/2331/19).

271. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to J. Weitz (Jerusalem). 30 May 1956

Copy: 130.15/3738/3

Summary

Sharett appoints Weitz to head a committee whose task will be to explore the practical possibilities of resolving the claims of the Arab refugees against Israel, whether personal or group claims, by means of compensation for their lands or by settling them in other countries, or by a combination of the two. Plans for such arrangements will be presented to the government which will have to approve them. The committee will be responsible to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will keep the prime minister and the minister of finance regularly updated on the committee's work.

272. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division. 1 June 1956

Coded Tel. XA289; Outg.: 93.01/2212/16

Summary

Eban reports a conversation with Murphy. Eban raised the necessity of activating the United States in order to speed up a positive decision in Canada regarding the purchase of the planes. He noted that Comay advocated caution because of certain Canadian sensitivities, but he felt confident that the State Department would find effective and safe ways of dealing with the issue. Eban added that even if there were success in Canada they would need a further 12 planes for night combat, like those that could be purchased in Italy, since the Canadian planes did not meet this requirement. He also spoke about the need for financial aid to facilitate the purchase, and indicated a number of ways to resolve this if it was decided to go ahead. Murphy replied that the Canadian prime minister was aware of the United States' positive attitude, and suggested that perhaps Israel could elicit an approach from London since Canada would not be so sensitive to an approach from there. Regarding the other issues, he replied that the decision was up to the secretary of state and perhaps the secretary might wish to meet Eban in light of this conversation.

Notes

1. See No. 266, n. 1.
2. The Soviet-Syrian arms deal, see No. 226.
3. See No. 267.
4. See No. 297 and n. 4 there.
5. No. 274.

273. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow and the Israel Legation in Belgrade. 2 June 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 758; Outg.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

The division reports on the capitulation of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to the Arab demands in the U.N. to omit from the motion Paragraph 4 in support of adopting a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict which would be acceptable to both sides.[1] This retreat turns the clock back to before the Soviet declaration of 17 April and their statement in the joint announcement in London. The division instructs the minister in Belgrade and the ambassador in Moscow to point out in their capitals the far-reaching implications of this retreat and its serious consequences for the future of the region.[2]

Notes

1. For the draft resolution that was adopted and the amendments introduced in it, see No. 277 (Editorial Note). See also Nos. 205, 225.
2. The ambassador in Moscow met with Zaitsev and stressed the gravity of the Soviet retreat to him. Zaitsev replied that the U.S.S.R. remained faithful to its 17 April statement, but was searching for a formula acceptable to both sides since it was opposed to imposing solutions. After the ambassador had pointed out the difference between externally imposed solutions, to which Israel was also opposed, and support for the Arabs in contravention of the paragraph which speaks of the creation of conditions for a peaceful settlement acceptable to both sides, the ambassador was assured that the content of his appeal would be conveyed to the U.S.S.R. government (See the ambassador in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 232, 4 June 1956, 130.09/2326/7).

   The minister in Belgrade was told by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that unanimity and acceptance of the other paragraphs of the resolution was important, even at the cost of giving up the disputed paragraph. They did not have any pro-Arab interest etc. After the minister's arguments he was promised that they would "discuss and clarify formulas" (See Levavi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 299, 4 June 1956, 130.11/2510/7).

274. Aide Mémoire by the Israel Ambassador in the U.S. (Washington) to the U.S. Deputy Under-Secretary of State. 3 June 1956

Notes

1. See No. 272.
2. See No. 267 and n. 4 there.
3. See No. 273.
4. See No. 195.
5. See No. 267.
6. See No. 5 and n. 3 there.

275. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 3 June 1956

Coded Tel. WIA320; Outg.: 93.01/2212/16

Summary

Eban reports a conversation he and Wiener had with Troxel[1] from the State Department concerning the water plans. Troxel said that the Department was prepared to support the implementation of separate water plans in the Jordan Valley on condition that the option for Arab storage in the Sea of Galilee was kept.[2] What was preventing the commencement of Jordanian work in Adassiyya[3] was Syrian opposition for fear that it would lead to a positive U.N. resolution regarding Benot Yaaqov. The State Department was looking for a way to overcome the Syrian objection, and to this end would try to persuade Syria that Israel had an alternative practical plan for diverting the Jordan outside the demilitarized zone, and consequently their objection to the work in Adassiyya was liable to lead to Israel's unilateral development without the Syrians being able to prevent this. Troxel believes that in this way it will be possible to get the Syrians to agree to Adassiyya and then the U.N. will have to approve the Benot Yaaqov project.

Eban maintains that the chances of this manoeuvre are uncertain, but he sees no harm in giving data on the alternative diversion from the Hula Lake. He asks for the ministry's position.[4]

Notes

1. Troxel initiated the conversation about an aide mémoire which was drafted in the State Department and submitted to Dulles on 5 June and which contained ideas for the resolution of a number of issues in the Israel-Arab conflict. Among other things, the aide mémoire discussed the question of how to get the Arab states to accept the Johnston plan (See *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XV, No. 386).
2. According to the Johnston plan, Lake Tiberias was to serve as a reservoir for the Jordan waters and the waters of the Yarmuk which would be diverted to it. Jordan and Israel were supposed to share these waters according to predetermined ratios.
3. According to the Johnston plan, Jordan was to establish a dam near the village of Adassiyya, close to the confluence of the Yarmuk and the Jordan, which would divert the Yarmuk waters into the Ghor eastern canal, which would irrigate the eastern part of the Jordan Valley.
4. See also No. 287.

276. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 3 June 1956

Coded Tel. 900; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur replies to Sharett's telegram[1] regarding the state of immigration from Morocco and reports that it was difficult to describe the situation accurately. The main danger threatening is the liquidation of the Jewish Agency's apparatus, but it was quite possible that emigration would in fact be stopped. They were waiting for the results of Easterman's talks.[2] According to the latest report, Easterman had received a promise that emigration would not be halted, but one could not rely on that. In any case they were preparing for the eventuality of illegal immigration, but as long as there was hope of averting the evil decree it was important to avoid all publicity. In the meantime emigration was continuing at an accelerated pace and they hoped to bring out about 13,000 people during the month.

Notes

1. In this telegram Sharett asked for a report on the state of immigration from Morocco, in response to the embassy's telegram of 30 May 1956 according to which the immigration situation was deteriorating and all attempts to improve it had been unsuccessful (See telegram from the embassy in Paris to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 884, 30 May 1956, 130.09/2346/65; Sharett to the embassy in Paris, Tel. 120, 1 June 1956, 130.09/2347/1).
2. See No. 286.
3. Si M'barak Bekkai, the prime minister of Morocco.

and the legal formulations must be found to facilitate the transfer of the property, as was done in Lebanon.

Notes

1. In June 1956 a group of paratroopers from Israel participated in an international parachuting contest which took place in Moscow.
2. In July 1956 two football matches took place between the teams of Israel and the Soviet Union; the first in Moscow, and the return match in Israel.
3. See Vol. 13, No. 361 (Editorial Note) and No. 399 and n. 4.
4. See No. 205.
5. See No. 171, n.1.
6. See No. 257.
7. French: take it too lightly.

280. W. Eytan (Warsaw) to the East European Division. 4 June 1956

Tel. 540; Inc.: 130.09/2306/10

Summary

Eytan reports on a meeting with the Czech Deputy Foreign Minister, Simovic. He began by mentioning the matter of Oren's release, and said that the time had come for Czechoslovakia to disassociate itself from the accusations levelled against Israel, its leaders and official representatives in the course of the Oren and Slanskỳ trials.

Simovic replied that a review was now under way of those trials in which procedural shortcomings had been discovered, but he could not say what the results would be. They also discussed improving the relations between the two countries and the exchange of ministers. Eytan noted that Israel's request for the removal of the accusations that had been leveled was not a condition for the exchange of representatives but would be helpful. Simovic said that when Israel appointed a representative the Czechs would also appoint one, when they found a suitable candidate.[7]

Notes

1. No. 265.
2. See No. 79 and n. 1 there.
3. See No. 265.

4. The reference is apparently to Menahem Bader, one of the leaders of the Mapam party. Nothing is known about the matter itself.
5. See No. 268.
6. See No. 299.
7. Following this conversation Kaddar visited the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was told among other things that it was being arranged that the president of Czechoslovakia would send a letter to the president of Israel announcing the end of the Oren affair and that they were exploring the possibility of formulating a plan for cultural cooperation. The beginning of financial negotiations between the two states was scheduled for 20 August. If Israel requested agrément for the appointment of Kaddar as minister, it would receive a positive response, but they had not yet decided who their minister in Israel would be. (See Kaddar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 846, 6 June 1956, 130.11/2509/9). Kaddar presented his credentials on 27 July.

281. M. Kidron [New York] to the President of the Security Council. 6 June 1956

Notes

1. In September 1955 the Egyptians issued new regulations regarding shipping in the Gulf of Eilat, whereby every ship intending to pass through the Straits of Tiran would have to possess a permit of transit from the Egyptian boycott office. As a result, in February 1956 the Greek ship *Konitsa* was held up in the Suez Canal on its way from Haifa to Eilat, but was allowed to continue on its way after nine days (See *Government Yearbook, 1956*, p. 239).
2. This ship was detained in Port Said on 2 September 1955, and released on 13 September, apparently as a result of American pressure (See Vol. 8, Nos. 367, 368, n. 4).
3. In November 1953 the Egyptians tightened the blockade and added foodstuffs and other goods to the list of forbidden merchandise which would be confiscated in Egyptian ports from vessels bound for Israel (See ibid., No. 598, n. 2). Accordingly, in December 1953 the Egyptians confiscated in Port Said a cargo of meat destined for Israel from the ship *Francamari* which was bound for Haifa (See ibid., No. 591, Editorial Note).
4. This refers to the Security Council Resolution adopted on 4 June – See No. 277.
5. After Hammarskjöld's approach to the Egyptians proved fruitless, the incoming minister of foreign affairs sent him a letter (See Rafael to Kidron, Tel. 340, 22 June 1956, 130.02/2427/6) in which she urged him to intervene with the Egyptian authorities and to report the results. After a second appeal proved ineffective, Israel submitted another letter to the Security Council – See No. 308.

282. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 7 June 1956

Coded Tel. 921; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Tsur cables that in a conversation with Maurice Faure he had been told that the French Government had imposed an embargo on the dispatch of light arms to the Middle East, including Israel.[1] In a Cabinet debate, on the other hand, wide support had been expressed for the need to strengthen Israel in all ways and to prevent the embargo from harming it. 11 ministers out of 13 were in favour of this and only 2, one of whom in Tsur's opinion was Pineau, were against. He was due to meet with Pineau at the beginning of the following week and would clarify matters.[4]

Notes

1. In the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bendor was told that the government decision stated that France would not allow the supply of light arms to the Middle Eastern states, with the reservation that where Israel was concerned instances of arms for defensive purposes must be accorded special attention (See Bendor to Tsur, 17 June 1956, 130.10/2530/7).
2. The Near East Arms Coordinating Committee in accordance with the Three Power agreement – NEACC.
3. See No. 289.
4. In a conversation which Najar had with Gilbert, the latter said that the negotiations between the two countries with regard to procurement would continue as before, and all the contracts which had been signed would be fully honoured on the agreed dates (See Najar to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 June 1956, 130.10/2522/21).

283. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Moscow). 7 June 1956

Coded Tel. 100; Outg.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Sharett sends a briefing to the director-general in advance of his meetings in Moscow.

The Security Council debate[2] could serve as the point of departure for the conversation. Israel had welcomed the 17 April declaration, but in its initial test it emerged that this wording was not in the least binding. Israel wondered

what in fact the Soviet position was. There were signs that the U.S.S.R. would join the demand for the reimplementation of the 1947 resolution. Eytan must restate Israel's position that this resolution had lost its validity, in view of the fact that the Arabs had rejected it at the time and worked against it. He must vigorously reiterate the Israeli principles of not giving up territory and the non-return of refugees. He must describe the peace plan in great detail. He must explain that the problem of peace on the Arab side was a question of will, not conditions. The Powers must encourage the Arab will to make peace with Israel. The arming of Egypt encouraged Nasser in his expansionist aspirations. Eytan must explain that Israel's protest against the arming of the Arabs was not a service to the West but was due to Israel's concern for its own security. He should say that Israel's attempt at one stage to obtain a defence treaty with the United States[6] resulted from the arming of the Arab states and Israel's criticism of the Baghdad Pact. Now this issue was no longer on the agenda and Israel considered that its best option lay in enhancing its defensive capability. Israel would welcome a general ban on arms shipments to the Middle East, but only after the menacing imbalance was corrected. He should also mention the subjects of emigration, the situation of the Jews, the Knesset delegation[7] and a trade treaty.[8]

Notes

1. No. 265.
2. See No. 273.
3. See Nos. 205 and 225.
4. In a speech in the Security Council on 31 May, Sobolev said among other things that it was clear that the success of the measures taken by the U.N. to reinforce the peace in the Palestine region depended above all on the cooperation of the sides in the implementation of these measures. Consequently, it would be right on the part of the Security Council especially to stress this fact and to call on the parties to avoid actions which were liable to violate the Armistice Agreements and the relevant U.N. resolutions (See *SCOR*, XI Year, 725 Meeting, p. 33).
5. In a political debate in the Knesset on 2 January 1956 (See No. 3, Editorial Note) Sharett said that Israel had submitted to the United States a plan for peace with the Arab states, in response to the plan for a settlement between Israel and its neighbours, as reflected in the Dulles speech of 26 August 1955 and Eden's Guildhall speech of 9 November 1955, from which it appeared that Israel was called upon to make territorial concessions. The Israeli plan on the other hands spoke of mutual border corrections. For details see *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 680.
6. Israel's approach to the United States on this issue was made in a letter of 12 April 1955 from Sharett, then still prime minister, to Dulles, 130.15/5938/3. Dulles' evasive reply, of 16 April 1955, in File 130.02/2455/3.
7. See No. 66. n. 2.
8. See No. 254.

284. M. Avidan (Warsaw) to the East European Division. 8 June 1956

Coded Tel. 551; Inc.:130.9/2306/10

Avidan reports on the conversation of the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Naszkowski. The director-general asked that the Polish government assist in resolving two problems; the emigration of members of separated families and the emigration of a group of 25 orphan children in Poland. He noted that the problem of the separated families involved thousands of people in Israel and his government was under pressure on this issue. The expediting of a solution would be greatly appreciated. Naszkowski replied that Poland was not prepared to permit all the Jews to leave, as they were an inseparable part of the Polish people, but they would continue to work for family unification and every justified case would find a solution. The director-general replied that he had not touched upon the issue of emigration as a whole but only on the issue of separated families and orphans.[1] They also discussed trade and cultural relations. The director-general stressed the need for reciprocity in the cultural sphere; in the sphere of trade he asked to expand the existing trade agreement, and pointed out that Israel would ask for negotiations on this issue to be held in Israel, since at the previous stage the contacts had been held in Poland. Naszkowski agreed to the principle of reciprocity in the spheres of culture and trade, and said that he would convey these points to the relevant bodies.

Note

1. At the end of July the transfer of these orphans to Israel began.

285. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 9 June 1956

Coded Tel. WIA341; Outg.: 93.01/2212/1

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Dulles.

He began by describing Nasser's expansionism and the danger this spelled for the Middle East. The picture that emerged was one of limitless ambition undermining the foundations of Middle East peace and stability. He had

asked the secretary if he agreed with his evaluation. He also mentioned the recent debate in the Security Council, which had exposed the impotence of the West which had agreed to delete the paragraph concerning a peace settlement from the resolution.[8] He concluded by saying that in light of the situation Israel's concern was greatly increased and he asked Dulles to expedite the progress on the arms issue. Even if the outcome of the arms purchase in Canada proved positive, Israel would need a further 12 F-86A planes from Italy. He also asked for approval for the release of Super Shermans in the countries where Israel was conducting negotiations and expediting the review of arms procurement in the United States, as discussed with Murphy.[9] He also mentioned the matter of the loan from the Export-Import Bank and the State Department's position concerning the water plan.

Dulles began his reply by referring to the arms issue and said that the United States had done its best in Canada and he would talk with Pearson again on Monday. He promised to consider the other requests in light of the situation in Canada. As to the political situation in the region, he asked if Israel had any advice to offer. He also pointed out that the deletion of the paragraph from the Security Council resolution was a mistake. Eban replied that the remedy was to strengthen Israel and to encourage anti-Nasserist elements in the Arab world. Dulles did not react to Eban's remarks concerning the Bank and the water plans.

Eban points out that he will talk with the Canadian ambassador on Tuesday[12] and will contact the State Department to find out the results of the talk with Pearson. According to reports he had received, the discussions in the Bank would end this month and the State Department would have to decide on the manner of the decision and its conditions.

Notes

1. See No. 165.
2. In May 1956 the Jordanian Prime Minister, Samir al-Rifa'i, was replaced by Sa'id al-Mufti. Shuckburgh of the British Foreign Office related the changes to personal disagreements among the leadership – See No. 261. In the same month the commander of the Arab Legion, Radi Innab, was replaced by the pro-Nasserist Abu- Nuwar (See No. 267, n. 4).
3. This agreement, which affirms among other things coordination between the armies, was achieved following the visit of the Jordanian commander in chief to Egypt at the beginning of May 1956.
4. 'Abdullah al-Tall, previously a high-ranking officer in the Arab Legion, with pro-Egyptian leanings, had from 1949 been living as a political exile in Egypt. He was permitted to return to Jordan only in 1955.
5. See No. 226.

6. At the beginning of April 1956 King Hussein visited Damascus. In his talks with President al-Quwatli it was agreed that the commanders of the armies of both countries would coordinate between them defence plans and military cooperation on the armistice lines in order to repulse any attack by Israel.
7. Between Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. See No. 229, n.4.
8. See No. 277 (Editorial Note).
9. See Nos. 272, 274.
10. See No. 244.
11. This apparently refers to the talks held between the two in Paris on 26 October 1955 and in Geneva on 31 October 1955.
12. It emerged that in the conversation Pearson said to Dulles that he had not raised the issue of Israeli procurement before the cabinet because he wished to make sure that the decision would be positive; also government crises had led to the postponement. At Dulles' request he agreed that Canada would begin to train Israeli pilots immediately in order to save time and to ensure that the planes, when they arrived, would be put into service immediately (See Eban to the United States Division, Tel.WIA352, 12 June 1956, 93.01/2212/16).

286. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 10 June 1956

Copy: 93.04/335/10

Summary

Tsur's letter deals with the fate of immigration from Morocco. A report received stated that the Moroccan government had decided to halt emigration.[1] In the wake of this news, urgent consultations were held with the participation of the ambassador and Jewish Agency officials dealing with immigration. At the consultation Easterman reported that he had met with Moroccan leaders, and that an arrangement had been arrived at whereby organised emigration would continue, with the assistance of the emissaries and "Kadima," the Jewish Agency organisation dealing with emigration in Morocco, for three months, after which the organisation would be dissolved and emigration would be on an individual basis. Tsur points out that this arrangement is only temporary and much depends on the nature of the contacts and relations that develop during the transition period. In any event, they would try to continue with this arrangement as far as possible.

Notes

1. This report was verified on 11 June, when the representatives of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency were summoned to the police and were given a statement regarding the prohibition of the activities of Kadima (the Jewish Agency

immigration office in Morocco) (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 945, 11 June 1956, in File 130.09/2345/5).

2. The telegram (No. 933, 8 June 1956, ibid.). In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs response it said that "for the moment we are not inclined towards an approach by you to Dulles" (See Najar to Eban, copy to Tsur, Tel. 62, 9 June 1956, 130.09/2311/6).
3. In the conversation Tsur proposed technical assistance and the establishment of diplomatic relations; his interlocutor was evasive (See Tsur to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 955, 12 June 1956, 130.09/2346/5).
4. A report on this conversation was not found and apparently it did not take place.

287. M. Sharett (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 11 June 1956

Coded Tel. 72; Outg.: 130.02/3688/2

Summary

Sharett puts forward arguments against Eban's proposal[1] concerning the water plans.

1. Apart from pumping from Lake Tiberias, engineers have raised the possibility of diverting the Jordan outside the demilitarized zone, but this has not yet been checked and it is not certain that relying on it would strengthen Israel's position vis-à-vis the Arabs and the State Department. Most people in Israel maintain that it would not, since the threat of resumption of work in the channel would be cancelled and the Arabs would focus their opposition on the issue of the allocation of the water.

2. Israel's achievements in the matter of the loan and the renewed discussion regarding the Jordan have only come about as a result of the threat of resumption of the work in the channel. Although this threat had weakened, if Israel presented a new plan to the State Department, it would be eliminated altogether.

Consequently, he suggests continuing with the line laid down in his previous cable[3] until the end of the discussion in the Bank. Israel should suggest to Troxel to hint to the Syrians about the well-known possibility of pumping from Lake Tiberias. He must tell the Syrians explicitly: the Adassiyya works would not be carried out if Israel could not work in Benot Yaaqov, but the reverse was not true.

Sherman disagrees with paragraph 2 and argues that an explicit abandonment of the threat would speed up a positive decision in the Bank. Sharett asks whether this is also Eban's position.[4]

Notes

1. No. 275.
2. See No. 241.
3. No. 248.
4. Eban replied that he would convey his opinion after consulting with Wiener, and that he believed that "Sherman is exaggerating in his supposition that the State Department has freed itself from the monster of the resumption of work" (See his telegram to Sharett, No. 350, 11 June 1956, 130.09/2311/8).

288. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 11 June 1956

Orig.: 130.11/2507/4

Summary

Avidar writes about the conversation between the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Semyonov and the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The director-general spoke according to instructions he had received from the minister.[1] He stressed the importance of direct contact between the parties and mentioned the disappointment in Israel over the U.S.S.R.'s position in the last Security Council debate.[3]

Semyonov replied that the Israel-Arab conflict was not the main problem of the Arab states. The principal problem was strengthening their independence and raising their standard of living. It was incumbent upon the enlightened nations, including the U.S.S.R., to assist the advancement of the Arab peoples.

Eytan replied briefly that it would be easier to advance the Arab peoples if there were peace. The conversation will be continued at a dinner at the embassy.

Notes

1. See No. 265.
2. Eytan headed the Israeli delegation to the armistice talks with Egypt which took place in January-February 1949 in Rhodes.
3. See No. 273.
4. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).
5. See No. 299.
6. See No. 295.

289. J. Tsur (Paris) to M. Sharett. 12 June 1956

Coded Tel. 950; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau in the course of which the latter sought to justify himself and to deny any change in his policy towards Israel. He described his talks in Moscow.[1] According to him the Russians had not expressed any hostile remarks towards Israel, and the main thrust of their anger was directed at the Baghdad Pact. He was convinced of their sincere desire to prevent an armed conflict in the region. He said that in his visit to Washington[4] he would try to persuade the Americans to strengthen Israel and to press Dulles to speed up the supply of planes from Canada. He stressed his efforts to exempt Israel from the embargo on light weapons. He complained about the attacks on him regarding his attitude to the Arabs and Israel. He said that the attacks on Nasser only strengthened him. He knows Nasser and knows that he is a little man whose country cannot play the imperialistic role that is being ascribed to it.

Tsur replied that he disagreed with Pineau and that the conciliatory efforts of East and West towards Nasser only increased his strength. With regard to the arms, he complained about the delay in the shipments of arms to Israel under the pretext of the debate in the Near Eastern Arms Coordination Committee (NEACC). Pineau replied that one reason for the replacement of Couve de Murville was that he had not displayed sufficient energy in the matter of arms supplies to Israel. At the conclusion of the conversation he gave Tsur the following decisions:

1. An instruction would be given to Bourgès-Maunoury to sign all the contracts to do with ground weapons on condition that a clause be inserted in the contract concerning France's commitment to the NEACC.

2. He was prepared to sell any plane to Israel, with the exception of the Mystère IV.

3. He was not prepared at the moment to sell further Mystères IV since he was still trying to put pressure on the United States and Canada for the supply of other planes. He promised to invite Tsur for a talk on his return from Washington.[7]

Notes

1. On this visit see No. 242 and n. 5 there.
2. In the second half of June 1956 the Soviet foreign minister, Dimitri Shepilov, visited Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. See No. 313 and n.1 there.

3. See No. 273.
4. The visit took place between 16-18 June 1956 – See No. 315.
5. See No. 286.
6. See No. 282.
7. On the meeting with Pineau see No. 315. Prior to this meeting the director of the European Department of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Bendor that Pineau had not managed to change Dulles' position. The United States would not give Israel arms, but it looked favourably on France and other countries supplying arms (See Bendor to the United States Division and the West European Division, Tel. 11, 21 June 1956, 130.02/2456/2).

   In a later meeting of Bendor with Maillard the latter was more qualified with regard to the arms contracts. He stressed that Pineau himself had undertaken not to sign any contracts without consulting the NEACC. He added that the question of the supply of arms to Israel was not a separate one and had to be seen in relation to general political problems that were pending between France on the one hand and England and the United States on the other, including the questions of Algeria and Germany (See Bendor to the Israel ambassador in Paris, 21 June 1956, 130.10/2522/21).

290. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 12 June 1956

Coded Tel. 954; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on the state of immigration from Morocco following talks he and others had held. The ban on the Kadima organisation was in force. The Moroccan minister Bouabid had said that the government did not intend to forbid the exit of Jewish citizens, but they were troubled by the activity of the organisation, which could arouse a hostile reaction in public opinion. They must also take into consideration Morocco's ties with the Arab world. It was difficult for Morocco to adopt openly a position which strengthened Israel. He hoped that an arrangement would be arrived at after further talks. Perhaps it would attenuate the brutal manner in which the decree had been carried out.

Notes

1. This apparently refers to a phone conversation between Sharett and Tsur, of which there is no record.
2. Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva, met with Bouabid following the closure of the Kadima office. The latter promised to get in touch with the Moroccan prime minister and to report the results "this very evening" (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 935, 11 June 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

3. Easterman met with Bekkai on 13 June. No details of the conversation were found. See No. 294.
4. The conversation took place the same day. A detailed report on the conversation is found in Tsur's telegram to Sharett and the West European Division, Tel. 955, 130.09/2346/5.
5. Which had permitted the Jews living there to emigrate to Israel.
6. See n. 4 above.

291. East European Division (Jerusalem) to Y. Avidar (Moscow). 12 June 1956

Coded Tel. 119; Outg.: 130.09/2326/5

Summary

The division expresses apprehension concerning the spate of reports in the newspapers on the increased immigration from the U.S.S.R.,[1] which were liable to elicit an Arab diplomatic reaction in Moscow. Asks if it is desirable to impose a blackout on this information.[2]

Notes

1. In 1956 there was a considerable increase in immigration from the U.S.S.R., as compared to previous years. Altogether 753 immigrants came that year from the U.S.S.R. to Israel (See Y. Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations*, p.128).
2. Avidar replied that it was unthinkable to omit the fact of immigration from the U.S.S.R. at a time when there were reports of immigration from all the other countries. Nevertheless, he recommended avoiding public mention and conversations with immigrants from the Soviet Union (See Avidar to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 286, 20 June 1956, 130.09/2326/7).

292. A. Eban (Washington) to M. Sharett. 13 June 1956

Coded Tel. 335; Inc.: 130.02/3688/2

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation between Wiener and Troxel, from which there emerged the State Department's policy on the water issue:

The secretary of state is prepared to approve a loan from the Export-Import Bank, but the delay arises from his fear that Israel might resume work in the demilitarized zone within a few weeks.

The secretary, for his part, is prepared to undertake an effort to resolve the demilitarized zone problem, in partnership with Johnston, by the next season. There are various plans, but the State Department does not wish to commit itself just now. Eban adds that this is the maximum cooperation possible for resolving the problem of the demilitarized zone in the coming weeks.[2]

Notes

1. The summary, dated 12 June 1956, in File 130.02/2420/18.
2. A detailed report on this conversation, dated 13 June 1956, in File 130.02/2420/18. The subject was again raised in Eban's conversation with Dulles on 10 July 1956 – See No. 327.

293. Prime Minister of Canada (Ottawa) to the Israel Ambassador in Ottawa. 14 June 1956

Note

1. See No. 266 and n. 2 there.

294. J. Tsur, N. Goldmann and S.Z. Shragai (Paris) to M. Sharett. 14 June 1956

Coded Tel. 967; Inc.: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

The writers sum up the situation in Morocco with regard to emigration.[1] The chances of an overall settlement with the Moroccan government are faint. They are trying to deal with about 9,000 persons who had already begun the immigration process and whose departure the Moroccans were prepared to permit. There was no possibility of preventing publication in the press, and because of this Israel had found it advisable to influence public opinion and Goldmann had held a press conference yesterday.[3] There were no grounds for optimism, but negotiations had not been halted. In the meantime an instruction had been issued to stop direct mail links with the immigration personnel there. As regards the situation in Tunisia,[4] they must immediately set about increasing immigration from there, which entailed

easing the medical selection requirements. Prompt action was needed there to increase the numbers of immigrants.

Notes

1. See No. 290.
2. The matter is obscure.
3. At a press conference in Paris on 13 June Goldmann said among other things that if a solution was not found to the problem of immigration from Morocco the Jewish Agency would be compelled to turn to wherever possible in order to exert pressure – to the French government, to international organisations and perhaps even to the U.N. Human Rights Commission, since the right of migration was included in the U.N. Human Rights Charter (See *Ha'aretz*, 15 June 1956).
4. Tsur reported that the situation in Tunisia was not altogether clear, however changes were in the air and the heads of the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress were warning against a worsening in the conditions of emigration. Therefore he had taken some steps to accelerate emigration. It was possible to get 30,000-40,000 Jews out of there. For this purpose personnel must be increased and bureaucratic and medical checks eased (See Tsur to the West European Division, 15 June 1956, 130.09/2346/5).

295. W. Eytan (Moscow) to the East European Division. 15 June 1956

Copy: 130.11/2507/8

Summary

Eytan tells about his second conversation with the U.S.S.R. deputy minister of foreign affairs. He opened by expounding on Israel's position and laid particular stress on the need for evening up the arms balance in the region. He again mentioned Israel's disappointment over the deletion of the paragraph in the Security Council resolution referring to an agreed settlement between the sides.

In reply Semyonov reiterated the U.S.S.R.'s desire for peace and for easing of tension in the region. He did not understand Israel's demand for the balance of power in view of the big territorial and population discrepancies between it and the Arab states. The Arabs would continue to strengthen themselves, and the U.S.S.R. would assist them in this. The deletion of the paragraph from the Security Council resolution was a practical necessity, since it was contrary to the declared position of the Arabs in the U.N. and it represented a departure from the framework of the Hammarskjöld report. The conversation was held in a good spirit.

Notes

1. See No. 288.
2. On Shepilov's visit to the Middle East see No. 289, n. 2 and No. 313, n. 1.
   Later Semyonov informed Avidar that the schedule of Shepilov's visit to the Middle Eastern countries had already been finalised and there was no possibility of changing it (See Avidar to Eytan, Tel. 283, 19 June 1956, 130.09/2326/7).
3. See Vol. 4, Companion Volume, Editorial Note, p. 24.
4. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).
5. See No. 209, n. 6.
6. A town in the Ukraine. In 1709 battles took place there between the Russian and Swedish armies, in the course of which the Swedish army was destroyed. These battles symbolised the decline of Sweden's military might and Russia's rise as a European power.

296. Editorial Note

A Change at the Helm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In the Knesset session on 18 June 1956 Ben-Gurion announced that the minister of foreign affairs, Moshe Sharett, had resigned, and that in his place Golda Myerson, the minister of labour, had been appointed. The next day, 19 June, he explained to the Knesset the background to the changes as follows: "...since security matters in the country have become unusually acute, and also the dangers of foreign policy have increased more than previously ... I have come to the conclusion that it is now necessary for the good of the state that there should be full coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, and now a different leadership for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is required." Ben-Gurion said further: "As long as there is a real danger of attack against us by our neighbours, security requirements must take precedence. This means: both foreign policy and internal policy must be adapted to security needs."
(See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, pp. 2067-2069.)

297. A. Eban [Washington] to J. F. Dulles (Washington). 18 June 1956

Notes

1. See No. 285.
2. For a report on this conversation see Eban's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 359, 15 June 1956, 130.02/2456/2. Regarding American aid to Israel, Murphy said that an examination of the problem was being made and that in another week they would be ready to hold a discussion with Israel.
3. The law enabling the United States to offer aid in food surpluses to foreign countries in return for payment in local currency.
4. This memorandum was passed by Dulles to Allen for his comments. The latter pointed out that the budgetary allocations under Act No. 480 for the current fiscal year had already been exhausted and that Israel had already received its share under the terms of the Mutual Security Act. Increasing the amount would run into administrative problems and "would probably be unwise at this time." It was impossible to judge what Israel's legitimate aid requirements were in the framework of the Mutual Security Act before a decision was reached regarding Israel's loan request from the Export-Import Bank. Even if justification was found for increasing the aid, it was not an appropriate time because of the talks the United States was holding with Saudi Arabia on prolonging the contract of the American Air Force base in Dhahran, and because of the presence of the Soviet foreign minister in the Middle East at this moment.

   Allen recommended replying to Israel that: a) It was not possible to increase the aid before 30 June; b) They would take into account Israel's aid requirements for the next fiscal year, but a decision could not be reached before Congress finished the legislation on this issue. Allen added that if it was not convenient for Dulles to inform the Israelis of the situation personally, he himself would do so or via Murphy (See *FRUS, 1955-57*, Vol. XV, No. 408).

298. M. Kidron (New York) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) and A. Eban (Washington). 20 June 1956

Coded Tel. XA361; Outg.: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Kidron reports on a meeting with the secretary-general of the U.N. The meeting came about after the secretary-general had given Kidron a draft of a letter to the prime minister which referred to the question of the outpost on the shore of Lake Tiberias and the boat.[1] At the meeting Kidron said that Israel rejected the demand for absolute freedom of movement for the

observers, which implied supervision, inspection and limitation of the state's sovereignty. He mentioned the arrogant behaviour of the observers, especially in Nitzana, and referred to Hutchison's hostile book which had just appeared.[4] Hammarskjöld reiterated his remarks to the prime minister that he would never suggest anything that might harm Israel's security, but he was convinced that the proposals would help Israel and would especially demonstrate that it did not reject the U.N. proposals. In any event, he promised to reconsider the matter. After several hours he met with Kidron for a second time and announced that he had decided to shelve the letter. He added that he had been impressed as to the gravity of the situation as presented by Kidron, and had decided that it warranted a return visit to Israel and Egypt. He suggested the dates between 18 and 24 July, and envisaged a short visit of 2-3 days. He requested an answer.[8]

Notes

1. See No. 243 and n. 2 there.
2. See No. 277 (Editorial Note).
3. The draft was not found, and perhaps was not sent in light of Hammarskjöld's remarks below that he had decided to cancel his letter.
4. Commander Elmo Hutchison, an American naval officer, presided as chairman of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission in 1952-1954. Because of his abstention from voting on the issue of the bus incident in Ma'ale Aqrabim (in March 1954) Israel left the commission, and only returned to it in October 1954. Major-General Vagn Bennike was the chief of staff of the U.N. Observer Force in Palestine in 1953-1954.
5. Among other things he said: "The British press does not frighten us any more, because times have changed. Egypt is prepared to cooperate with anyone who will stretch out his hand to it, but not at the expense of its independence or at the expense of another Arab state. We shall make sure that all the Arab states will be independent. For the first time representatives of Morocco and Tunisia are sitting with us. We hope that next year the representative of an independent Algeria will also sit with us. Palestine has been occupied. Such a thing could have been our lot if we had not grown strong" (See *Ha'aretz*, 20 June 1956).
6. See No. 313 and n. 1 there.
7. The leaders of the non-aligned nations – Tito, Nasser and Nehru – were scheduled to convene in mid-July in Brioni in Yugoslavia.
8. Tekoah's response (telegram to Kidron, No. 346, 24 June 1956, 130.09) states a) Burns wrote to Myerson and asked for her consent for an observation post on the shore of Lake Tiberias (his letter, of 19 June, in File 130.16/2954/7); b) Israel is interested in providing services to the U.N. observers in Nitzana, in order to bolster its claim that the demilitarized zone is Israeli territory. Kidron's description of I.D.F. soldiers serving as batmen of the U.N. officers is not exact; c) They expect to receive Hutchison's book shortly.

   Eytan responded to this telegram, after consulting with the minister of foreign affairs and Eban. Their mutual inclination was not to encourage the visit, and to give a politely negative reply. If nevertheless the visit did take place, it was desirable to set a

date for it after the secretary-general returned from his visit to Moscow and he would decide on his path in light of his talks. The assumption is that if he visits the region he will devote most of his attention to Nasser, particularly in light of the disappointment he had suffered on the issue of freedom of navigation. From a conversation with the prime minister Tekoah understood that they should hint to the secretary-general that the question of the boat in Lake Tiberias was over from Israel's point of view and that there would not be any point to his visit if he intended to devote it to palliative arrangements (See two telegrams of Eytan to Kidron, Tels. 351, 352, 25 June 1956, 130.09/2331/19).

299. Acting Permanent Representative of Israel to the U.N. [New York] to the U.N. Secretary-General. 20 June 1956

Note

1. In an interview which Nasser gave to the *Al Akhbar* newspaper on 13 May 1956 and which was broadcast on Cairo Radio on 29 May 1956, he said among other things: "The Palestinian Army which was set up by Egypt has become a mighty force, armed and highly trained, and the role of its soldiers is to wreak vengeance for their land and their people who were expelled from their native land. I was no stranger to the Fedayeen, I got to know them during the Palestine war. When I decided to set up the Fedayeen corps I recalled the days of Faluja and I knew at once that the sons of that land, who believe in their right to it, will be worthy to bear the name Fedayeen (See the telegram of the Armistice Division to Tekoah, 29 May 1956, 130.02/2410/1).

300. M. Comay (Ottawa) to the British Commonwealth Division. 20 June 1956

Coded Tel. 212; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

The prime minister summoned Comay for a talk. He acknowledged Israel's difficult situation, but the responsibility lay first and foremost with the Powers, primarily with the United States. Canada would be prepared to assist, but it was unjustified to exempt the Americans from responsibility. He promised to talk with Eden when he visited him, and to report. This conversation reinforces the idea of a package deal, as he had discussed with Eban, in the context of which several states would combine to supply arms

and would also issue a joint political statement. He would be meeting with the United States ambassador in Canada.

Notes

1. It appears that the prime minister did not contact Comay; the next conversation concerning the planes took place between Comay and the Canadian minister of foreign affairs on 13 July – See No. 335.
2. See No. 307, n. 2.
3. In the conversation Comay told his American counterpart about the position of Israel's request to Canada, including his latest conversation with the prime minister. He emphasised that the responsibility rested with the Americans who had to break the ice by direct participation in the arming of Israel. The ambassador promised to cable the secretary of state in this spirit (See Comay to Myerson, Tel. 215, 21 June 1956, 130.09/2287/3).

301. J. Tsur (Paris) to G. Myerson. 20 June 1956

Coded Tel. 994; Inc.: 130/09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on Easterman and Amos [Rabel?]'s meeting with Laghzaoui. In the end it was decided to enable all the people in the camp in Casablanca to emigrate, and Kadima would be allowed to continue with its activities until the camp was closed. At the moment there are 5,400 people in the camp. Tsur asks not to give any publicity to the matter.

Notes

1. Sent also to Shazar, Josephthal and Beth Arye.
2. The letter was not found.
3. See No. 304.

302. R. Shiloah (Washington) to A. Eban. 22 June 1956

Coded Tel. WIA381; Outg.: 93.01/2213/10

Summary

Shiloah reports on a private conversation with Allen. Shiloah asked what the State Department contemplated doing after the disappointment in Canada

and in light of Nasser's speeches. He replied that for the present they had not concluded their discussions and had not reached any conclusions. He surmises that in the end Israel would receive the planes within a few weeks – from Canada or Italy. With regard to the grant, he replied that there were only faint chances of increasing it. Shiloah infers from this conversation and the previous one with Russell that total helplessness prevails in the State Department. He asks if it is worth organising a vigorous campaign of internal and public pressure on the administration. He suggests a conversation of the minister of foreign affairs with Lawson, and also a letter from her to the secretary.

Notes

1. In this telegram (Shiloah to Eban and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 379, 21 June 1956, 130.02/2456/2) Shiloah reported that he had heard from his sources that according to Allen the United States took a very grave view of Shepilov's visit to the Middle East and Nasser's recent speeches, and that in the next few days they would be holding far-reaching discussions in the State Department on United States policy in the Middle East.
2. See No. 309.
3. See No. 300.
4. See No. 298 and n. 5 there.
5. See No. 317.

303. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in London. 22 June 1956

Coded Tel. 858; Outg.: 130.09/2321/1

Summary

The division reports on Nicholls' conversation with the minister of foreign affairs. Nicholls asked that Israel refrain as far as possible from giving publicity to the arms it was receiving and that it should not over-publicise its need for various types of arms and the steps it was taking to obtain them. The Americans and the British, he said, don't like to be nagged. The minister of foreign affairs reiterated Israel's arms requirements and the government's obligation to inform its citizens about the situation. Nicholls asked about the political significance of the changes in the government. The minister of foreign affairs replied that the prime minister was seeking peace and would not go to war unless it was forced upon him. She denied rumours of changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Note

1. Refers to two destroyers which Britain sold to Israel. They reached Haifa on 20 June and were named "Yaffo" and "Eilat."

304. J. Tsur (Paris) and S.Z. Shragai to G. Myerson. 22 June 1956

Coded Tel.19; Outg: 130.09/2346/5

Summary

Tsur reports on the state of the exodus of Jews from Morocco. Following Goldmann's statement to the press, the awakening of the public in the United States and Easterman's activity, the authorities in Morocco had woken up and announced the possibility of the departure of the Jews in the camp. The Moroccan authorities were demanding that the Kadima organisation acting on behalf of the Zionists should act to evacuate the transit camp as quickly as possible and prevent the Jews from flocking to the camp. In the meantime the order forbidding the departure of Jews from Morocco had been rescinded, but the intention is apparently to allow individual and not organised departure. Negotiations on the problem as a whole had still not begun. Efforts were being made to bring over the Jews in the camp in Morocco as fast as possible, but they were not acting to prevent the flow of Jews to the camp. He reiterated the need to avoid publicity in Israel.

Notes

1. Also sent to Shazar, the West European Division and M. Sharett.
2. See No. 294, n. 3.
3. See No. 301.

305. M. Kidron (New York) to W. Eytan. 26 June 1956

Notes

1. See No. 298.
2. Hammarsjköld's letter to Ben-Gurion, which was transmitted in the above telegram, was typed separately, text in File 130.02/2404/4.
3. See No. 298, n. 7.

4. Ben-Gurion replied to Hammarsjköld on 29 June that he would be happy for the opportunity to exchange ideas with him "on all the problems that concern us and the entire Middle East region," and that he would be happy to discuss ways and means to avoid the danger of war and establish better relations to the extent possible with Israel's neighbours. Hammarsjköld responded to this, via a message from Cordier to Kidron on 3 July, that he would do everything to make contact with Nasser after he met with Ben-Gurion. Referring to the Ben-Gurion–Burns meeting (see No. 312) on 28 June, Hammarskjöld noted that he wished to discuss "fundamentally important points" which Ben-Gurion had raised, and expressed the hope that until then Ben-Gurion would cooperate with Burns in his efforts to improve the situation (See Ben-Gurion to Hammarsjköld, 29 June 1956, 130.02/2448/5; Cordier to Kidron, 3 July 1956, 93.03/3042/3).

306. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan and D. Lewin. 27 June 1956

Coded Tel.176; Inc.: 130/09/2321/2

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Nehru. Elath began by reviewing Israel's position and its peaceful aspirations. He explained that although Israel desired a comprehensive and overall settlement it was prepared to consider a solution in stages or any other arrangement. He mentioned Johnston's water plan as an instrument for mending relations with the Arab states.

Nehru replied that he was concerned about the situation in the region. He stressed India's difficulties over involvement in the conflict because of Pakistani propaganda. He noted that in his talks in Syria he had heard harsh criticism of "India's sympathetic attitude" towards Israel. He appreciated Israel's readiness to reach a settlement. He praised Nasser profusely, describing him as the only leader of stature in the Middle East, and noted that Egypt's internal problems prevented him from any consideration of a rapprochement with Israel. He pointed out that today the chances of a settlement with Egypt were better than in the past since Nasser had become stronger. He would clarify this when he met him in Yugoslavia and Cairo. He thanked Elath politely for his invitation to visit Israel, but did not add a single word which might indicate a definitive reaction, not even to express regret "for not being able to accept the invitation on account of..." etc. He did however react to a hint with regard to establishing relations.

Elath's conclusion from this conversation was that there was no progress in Nehru's attitude to Israel. He was reserved and did not display any

desire to do anything which might commit his government and himself to an initiative or any concrete action. Elath believes that there is no chance whatever for any positive active intervention by India in relations between Israel and the Arab states. He suggests following the progress of the talks between the three leaders in Yugoslavia.

Notes

1. Nehru arrived in London to take part in the conference of British Commonwealth prime ministers; Elath met him in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the briefing for the conversation Elath was asked to allude to the suggestion of the Indian ambassador in Cairo, Ali Yavar Jung, who had met Kidron while staying in New York and had put forward an idea for resolving the issue of Israel-Arab relations. In his view, trying to negotiate an overall peace had no chance of success, and a plan for progress in three stages should be proposed: the implementation of the Johnston plan, settlement of the refugee problem together with cancelling the internationalisation of Jerusalem, and at the third stage – border corrections together with abolishing the blockade. Nehru was enthusiastic about the plan, and particularly about the idea of implementing the Johnston water project, and had already begun contacts with the Syrians in order to end their opposition to the plan. According to Jung, Nasser had also accepted the plan as a realistic basis for action. Sharett had instructed Kidron to respond positively to Jung's ideas, and to request further clarifications. Kidron was also asked to explore the possibility of a secret meeting between Nehru and the minister of foreign affairs or the prime minister of Israel (See Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Elath, Tel. 280, 26 June 1956, 130.09/2321/1; Kidron to the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. X257, 24 May 1956, 130.09/2333/09; Sharett to Kidron, Tel. 239, 28 May 1956, 130.09/2331/19).
2. The remarks were made when Ben-Gurion presented his government in the Knesset on 2 November 1955 (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XIX, p. 233).
3. Mrs. Pandit, the Indian High Commissioner (Ambassador) in Britain.
4. In June 1956 letters were exchanged between Ceylon and Israel, according to which agreement was reached in principle for the establishment of diplomatic relations at the level of legations. Authorisation was given for the appointment of the minister in Rangoon, Yaacov Shimoni, as non-resident minister in Colombo (See M. Yager, *The Long Journey to Asia* [Hebrew])
5. K.M. Panikkar, the Indian ambassador in France, was in London for the conference of Commonwealth prime ministers. In a conversation on 9 July he told Elath that Nehru, at his meeting with Tito and Nasser in Yugoslavia, was likely to adopt a more active and positive position on issues affecting Israel than he had been prepared to admit to in a conversation with Elath, lest Israel interpret his remarks as constituting a commitment to it. Panikkar also warned that Israel could not expect major changes in India's position, since it was afraid of appearing to be a defender of Israel, something which Pakistan would be happy to exploit in its anti-India propaganda (See Elath to Eytan and Levin, Tel. 217, 4 July 1956, 130.09/2321/4).

   In a further telegram Elath suggested that Ben-Gurion send personal letters to Nehru and Tito, in which he would explain Israel's concern over Nasser's aggressive

intentions, and would stress Israel's desire for peace and cooperation with its neighbours. Ben-Gurion replied that in view of the fact that Nehru had not responded positively to the invitation to come to Israel or for Ben-Gurion to visit India, sending these letters would amount to harassment (See Elath's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 June 1956, 130.09/231/3; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Elath, Tel. 410, 2 July 1956, 130.09/2321/3).

307. West European Division (Jerusalem) to J. Tsur (Paris). 27 June 1956

Coded Tel. 219; Outg.: 130/09/2347/1

Summary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs agrees with the embassy's opposition to a "package deal" regarding arms. Gilbert had received disappointing reports on the talks in Washington. He believes that the chances in Canada were negligible, and Dulles had not altered his position. In Eban's opinion the NEACC was a theoretical institution and the French brought it up only as a pretext. Israel must insist on the demand for another two dozen planes, tanks and anti-tank missiles. The reports of the arming of Egypt and Syria were disturbing.

Notes

1. In this telegram (24 June 1956, 130.09/2346/5) opposition was expressed to the idea of a "package deal" (See No. 300), which in the view of the embassy was likely to hinder more than help.
2. The conversations between Dulles and Pineau – See No. 289 and n. 7 there, No. 309.

308. M. Kidron [New York] to the President of the Security Council. 28 June 1956

Notes

1. No. 281.
2. This letter remained unanswered.

309. R. Shiloah (Washington) to J. Herzog. 28 June 1956

Coded Tel. 93.01; Inc.: 2212/16

Summary

In a conversation with Allen the latter reported on Pineau's visit and information regarding Shepilov's visit in the Middle East was exchanged. Allen stated that Pineau had said that France believed that arms should be supplied to Israel, but did not want to be the sole supplier. He demanded cooperation from the United States and other Western states. The secretary did not adopt a position, but took note of Pineau's position. Regarding Shepilov's visit, Allen pointed out that perhaps his apprehension about it had been exaggerated. Shiloah warned against minimising the value of the visit, and argued that only in the course of time would it transpire whether anything had been agreed between Nasser and Shepilov. Allen also announced that they had not managed to increase the grant to Israel. He promised to speed up the handling of the loan request to the Export-Import Bank.

Notes

1. Eban had been summoned to Israel for consultations.
2. See No. 289, n.7, No. 307.
3. See No. 313.
4. See No. 338.
5. See No. 302.
6. See No. 297 and n. 4 there.

310. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 28 June 1956

Copy: 130/02/2424/15

Ben-Gurion suggests that the minister of foreign affairs study a proposal to promote the organisation of a bloc of small peace-loving states, which would fight inside and outside the United Nations for principles of peace and cooperation between all nations; a ban on hostile acts, political, economic or military; a ban on incitement to war; abolition of discrimination of all kinds and a commitment to resolve all conflicts between states peacefully. If the minister is in favour, he suggests issuing instructions to

the representatives in the countries which seem suitable – the Scandinavian and Latin American states, Switzerland, Burma, Ceylon, Laos, Cambodia and others – and beginning negotiations for the establishment of the bloc. He asks for comments from the experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the opinion of several representatives overseas. Appended is a summary containing reactions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from representatives abroad and from two Knesset members.

Notes

1. Actually, the "Northern States " Bloc.
2. Norway, Denmark and Iceland – members of NATO, Finland – influenced by the Soviet Union.
3. The response of the minister of foreign affairs was not found, and in any case the subject was dropped.

311. M. Kidron [New York] to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 29 June 1956

Copy: 93.03/3042/3

Summary

Kidron gives explanations regarding the visit of the secretary-general of the United Nations to Israel in July. From the contacts and the letters exchanged it appears that the secretary-general is seeking an opportunity to iron out the differences between him and the prime minister. He wishes to prove to the prime minister that he, and of course the United Nations, are not in confrontation with Israel. He intends to come without a retinue, and to enable the prime minister to say all that is on his mind. He asserts that he now understands Israel's problems and that the situation in the region is now more serious than it was during his previous visit.

Notes

1. See No. 305, and n. 2 there.
2. See No. 298, n. 8.
3. Actually 20 June – See No. 298.
4. See, for example, Kidron to Tekoah, Tel. 367, on 21 June (130.02/2436/8), which mentions Hammarskjöld's intervention on the issue of the demarcation of the border between Israel and Egypt and the complaints to the Israel-Jordan and Israel-Syria Armistice Commissions.

312. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 29 June 1956

Coded Tel. 367; Outg.:130/16/2948/4

Summary

Tekoah reports on the meeting of the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs with Burns on 28 June, which dealt with a number of issues. The prime minister raised the issue of the situation on the Jordan border, where there had been an increasing number of incidents.[2] If it transpired that Jordan was unable or uninterested in stopping them, Israel would have to stop them itself. He spoke about Article VIII[5] and criticised the vague and misleading description given by Burns in his memorandum to Hammarskjöld. Jordan's non-compliance with Article VIII was tantamount to cancelling the agreement, in which case it would no longer obligate Israel either, apart from the cease-fire. If Burns did not consider himself obliged to implement the article, since he was not represented in the Special Committee, then the prime minister assumed that he would not consider himself obligated to intervene when Israel itself ensured that its rights were upheld. Burns replied that he would convey Israel's position to Jordan. These subjects took up most of the conversation. In the remainder they discussed a number of problems, such as the renewal of the activity of the Israel-Egypt Armistice Commission, the border demarcation in Gaza, the U.N. observation post on Lake Tiberias, the fortifications in Hagovrim[8] and a commanders' arrangement with Jordan.

Notes

1. In File 130.16/2949/3. For Tekoah's comment prior to the meeting see his memorandum to the minister of foreign affairs of 27 June in File 130.02/2428/3.
2. According to a report drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, apparently in mid-July 1956 (in File 130.16/2949/3), the number of incidents between 26 April and 10 July 1956 reached 49, in which 6 Israelis were killed and 7 wounded. The worst incidents that occurred in June 1956 were: on 3 June Jordanians opened fire on the Poalei Agudat Israel neighbourhood in north Jerusalem, which caused a bush fire in a field. When the residents went out to extinguish it, firing from the Jordanian side was resumed and one Israeli was killed. On 5 June the Jordanians opened fire on workers working in the fields of Kibbutz Yad Hanna, two workers were wounded. On 24 June Jordanian positions opened fire on a Border Police patrol near to Kibbutz Nir Eliyyahu, two policemen were killed.
3. On 4 June 1956 King Hussein declared in Jordanian Jerusalem that he promised that "until our land is restored to us we shall remain on the alert and shall not lay down our arms until our goals are achieved. We shall march forward to liberate our

motherland...no matter what the price...until we achieve victory and raise our flag over our liberated motherland." The declaration by Abu-Nuwar was made in Iraq whilst attending the manoevres of an Iraqi Army division. Abu-Nuwar said that he hoped that this division would take part "in the near future" in a military action in Palestine (See Survey of the Armistice Division, No. 181, June 1956, which quotes *Falastin* of 5 June and Radio Baghdad on 16 June, 130.02/2440/7).

4. In a letter to Ben-Gurion on 6 July (in File 130.16/2949/3), Burns stated that he had raised the issue with the rulers of Jordan who replied that after the changes of personnel among the Legion command a certain disarray prevailed in its ranks. However, it was once more under full control, and the policy of the Jordanian government and army was to observe punctiliously the conditions of the armistice cease-fire. On the other hand the Jordanians complained to him about the I.D.F.'s behaviour on the border, and requested that the I.D.F. act in such a way as to avoid arousing the apprehensions of the Jordanian Army.
5. Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement deals with the setting up of a special commission made up of representatives of the two sides, whose job will be to draft, expand and improve the armistice arrangements relating to issues which remained in dispute, and among other things, the issue of freedom of access to the holy places and the activity of the humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus (See Vol. 3, Appendix 8, p. 717).
6. This memorandum was attached to the Hammarsjköld report of 9 May 1956 (U.N. Document S/3596) as Appendix VI.
7. See No. 298, n. 8.
8. Refers to the fortifications which Israel had erected in Sussita and Hagovrim in the demilitarized zone. U.N. observers who visited these places on 12 and 13 June reported on the fortifications which they saw there. Burns referred to this in a letter to Myerson (29 June, in File 130.16/2953/11) and asked for several fortifications, which in his opinion did not conform with the armistice agreement, to be dismantled. Myerson replied (letter of 2 July, in File 130.02/2434/8) quoting from Ben-Gurion's remarks in the Knesset, that Israel was prepared to observe the armistice agreements faithfully, but this obligation was also binding on the other side. She suggested that the issue be sorted out in a conversation between the two. On this see No. 325.
9. On 28 June the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission discussed the Nir Eliyyahu incident (see note 2 above). The chairman, Commander Terril, voted in favour of a Jordanian draft resolution placing the blame for the incident on Israel. After the above meeting Burns issued a statement in which he said that he took a grave view of the incident not only because of the loss of life, but also in consideration of the promises given by the sides to observe the cease-fire unconditionally. Considering this and also certain points connected with the resolution of the Armistice Commission and in the testimony given to the Commission and which required clarification, he sees the need for additional study of the question. This statement, which was issued in the absence of an instance of appeal against the Armistice Commission's resolution, was seen as a gesture to Israel. At the beginning of July Commander Terril was transferred from this position.

313. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 29 June 1956

Coded Tel. Outg.: 130.11/2506/4

Summary

The division sends the first review of the Shepilov journey, based on published reports.[1] From the announcements it emerged that Shepilov preferred to avoid making binding statements regarding Israel. It appeared that he had successfully withstood the pressure to wash his hands of the 17 April declaration.[2] In his speeches he stressed that the Soviet Union was not opposed to friendly relations between the Arabs and the West. If there is a tone of disappointment on the part of the Arabs, this must be because of his clarification that arms shipments were not equivalent to consent for an attack on Israel. It may be assumed that general promises were made to the Arabs and that concrete discussion was left for the visit of the Arab leaders to the Soviet Union.

Notes

1. On 1 June Shepilov was appointed minister of foreign affairs of the Soviet Union. According to American sources, the invitation to come to Egypt for the celebrations of the evacuation of the British forces from the Suez Canal region had been sent to him a few months earlier, when he was the editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, and his decision to come as minister of foreign affairs embarrassed his hosts. In the course of his visit (17-22 June) he offered assistance with the funding of building the Aswan Dam totalling 400 million dollars, purchase of the entire Egyptian cotton harvest for payment in sterling, cancellation of Egypt's debt to the Soviet Union for the purchase of arms, and the setting up of various plants, among them a steel-manufacturing plant. With regard to the Aswan Dam Nasser answered that it was impossible to make headway so long as there was no agreement with Sudan concerning the division of the Nile waters (see *FRUS 1955-57*, Vol. XV, No. 411.)
   From Egypt Shepilov continued to Syria (23-24 June) and Lebanon (25-27 June).
   At the end of these visits it was announced that it had been decided to sign trade and cultural agreements between the Soviet Union and these two states. On Israel's unsuccessful efforts to invite Shepilov to visit Israel, see No. 295 and n. 2 there.
2. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).

314. F. E. Shinnar (Cologne) to the West European Division. 29 June 1956

Coded Tel. 03; Inc.: 130.10/2539/5

Summary

Shinnar reports on the foreign policy debate in the German Bundestag. So far the issue of relations with Israel had not been raised. Altmayer told Shinnar that a debate was being held in his party whether to raise the question. In accordance with instructions from Israel he replied that Israel did not see a need for this. Brentano's report on the conference of German representatives in Istanbul was sketchy, and apparently intentionally so.

Notes

1. From 27 June, in File 130.09/2539/4. Shinnar reported on the foreign policy debate in the Bundestag and on the possibility that Brentano would mention the problem of relations with Israel. On these issues there was an exchange of telegrams between the delegation in Cologne and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (See Anug to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tels. 501, 502, 27 June 1956, ibid.). Anug also pointed out that a report had appeared in the press that in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs there had lain for three months now a letter from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs which said that the government of Israel would not be opposed to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Germany. "This letter has still not been answered."
2. In the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it said that "we are not interested in appearing either as demanding relations or rejecting them. Therefore we suggest that the matter be left in the hands of the Germans for internal polemics" (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the delegation in Cologne, Tel. 784, 27 June 1956, 130.10/2539/4).

315. J. Tsur (Paris) to G. Myerson. 2 July 1956

Coded Tel. 76; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Tsur talked with Pineau about arms purchases. Tsur complained that there had been a total halt in shipments to Israel, and that many items which had been agreed to in principle were being delayed. He criticised the activity of the NEACC (Near East Arms Coordination Committee), and said that the exchanges of information in the committee only led to publicising the

arms deals. He pointed out the difficulties which Israel was encountering in Canada and requested the supply of a further 24 Mystère IV planes. Pineau did not reject the idea and promised to consider the matter as well as the other items listed by Tsur. He also noted that he would not now be sending any more arms to the Arab states and that the contract for the sale of tanks and cannon to Saudi Arabia would be cancelled. After further urging he promised to release immediately a number of items, especially ammunition but also 10 AMX tanks. Pineau stressed once again that he and his ministry personnel alone were dealing with the arms issue.

They also discussed the status of Nasser and the Arab League. Pineau said that a change was taking place in the United States and Britain with regard to Nasser. He, for his part, believed that Nasser should not be attacked verbally, since such attacks only enhanced his standing, but they should work to isolate him by joint coordinated action.

Notes

1. Prior to this conversation the Foreign Ministry sent Tsur instructions; in particular he was asked to argue that the transfer of arms to Israel not be made conditional on the agreement of the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee. Nor would this be possible in view of the rapidity of developments in the Middle East and the security needs of Israel (see West European Division to Tsur, Tel. 234, 1 July 1956, 130.09/2347/3).
2. See No. 289, n.2 and No. 309
3. See No. 282, n.1.

316. J. Tsur (Paris) to G. Myerson. 3 July 1956

Coded Tel.; Inc.: 130.02/2457/9

Summary

Tsur reports that Pineau revealed to him in strict confidence that he and the minister of defence had agreed on a plan to supply arms to Israel secretly, unknown to the British and the Americans. He spoke in a mysterious manner, with hints, and said that the arrangements would be made between their security services and those of Israel. He added that the Israeli government already knew about this from other channels.[1] Tsur understood from his hints that France was ready to send all the arms that Israel had requested, including the Mystères, in this way. Tsur adds that he has his doubts regarding the practicality of this process, but it may possibly open

the way for a more rapid supply or at least for an undisclosed increase in the quantities. He requested a reply.[3]

Notes

1. Prior to this decision there had been secret contacts between the security establishments of France and Israel and an agreement signed (in June) by which France would open up its arms stores to Israel without asking for the agreement of the United States and Britain. In return Israel gave an undertaking for military and intelligence cooperation which would assist France in its struggle with the rebellion in Algeria and with Algeria's supporter, Nasser. This was after Israel had persuaded the French of its capability. The fact that Israel was willing to pay for the arms in cash and in dollars helped France to make this decision (See M. Golani, *Israel in Search of a War: The Sinai Campaign, 1955-1956*, pp. 25-36).
2. Report not found and the meeting apparently did not take place.
3. Tsur wrote in his memoirs that in response to the foregoing information he received instructions to return at once to Israel. In conversation with Ben-Gurion and Myerson it became clear that this information had already reached them through the security channels. Tsur requested that coordination between the embassy and representatives of the Ministry of Defence in Paris be preserved. It was important to continue outwardly to seek to obtain arms, in order to preserve secrecy (See J. Tsur, *Paris Diary*, pp. 220-271 [Hebrew]).

317. G. Myerson [Jerusalem] to J. F. Dulles (Washington). 4 July 1956

Notes

1. At the celebrations held in Egypt to mark the evacuation of British forces from the Suez Canal zone.
2. See No. 298, n. 5.
3. See No. 195.
4. This statement was made at a dinner held by B'nai B'rith in Washington (see *Ha'aretz*, 10 May 1956).
5. See No. 327.

318. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 4 July 1956

Coded Tel. WIA411; Outg.:93.01/2213/1

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Allen. Eban informed him of Israel's difficulties in its attempts to purchase arms in France and Canada and asked for clarification of the United States position prior to his talk with Dulles.[1] Allen said that in Dulles' talks with Pineau, the latter had not pressed particularly for the supply of American arms to Israel, but rather that the U.S. should take more responsibility for the French supply. Dulles had not gained the impression that France would avoid supplying Israel if the United States did not itself supply it. He stressed that if the French announced their decision to sell the AMX tanks, the 24 Mystères and the anti-tank weapons to Israel, the United States would view this favourably. If the French were to state that they had reached the decision after consultation with their allies, the United States would not deny it. A hitch would only arise if it was described as a tripartite decision, that is – British-French-American. Regarding the Canadian deal, the secretary of state had still not given up, although Pearson's situation was difficult because of the complex relations between Washington and Canada. He suggested that Israel should act simultaneously in all three arenas: in Canada, Italy and in France.

They then proceeded to discuss Israel's request for a loan from the Export-Import Bank.[5] Allen said that he would try to get the secretary to make a definitive clarification of his stand at his forthcoming meeting with Eban. He noted that Nasser's request for aid for the construction of the Aswan Dam was frozen, on account of absurd proposals made by Nasser, whose main concern was with global aspirations which left no room for considering development plans.[6]

Notes

1. See No. 327.
2. See No. 313, n.1.
3. See No. 289, n.7 and No. 309.

   But compare the report of Bendor from Paris on a meeting with Maillard, who told him that repeated meetings of NEACC had taken place. At the latest meeting, with British and American participation, the British had opposed any dispatch of arms to Israel "at present," "and," he said "we have many problems at NEACC because of you" (See Bendor to British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 108, 6 July 1956, 130.02/2456/2; See also No. 339, n. 3).

4. See No. 292.
5. The building of the Aswan Dam was Egypt's most important development project. It was aimed at assuring Egypt of a regular supply of water for drinking, irrigation and the production of electricity while avoiding the destructive flooding which followed the annual Nile inundation. In December 1955 the World Bank, the United States and Britain announced their willingness to help provide funds to build the dam under certain conditions including that Egypt reached agreement with its neighbours in the Nile basin. The Egyptians demanded guarantees of funding for all stages of building the dam (See *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XV, p. 323). For the withdrawal of the United States from its agreement to help fund the dam, see No. 345.

319. E. Elath (London) to G. Myerson and the British Commonwealth Division. 4 July 1956

Coded Tel. 216; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Elath was summoned to the British Foreign Office, where Kirkpatrick, in the name of the foreign secretary, informed him that Britain would not authorise the sale of anti-submarine planes to Israel. Furthermore, because of the difficulties of supply they could not sell Meteor fighter planes, but could supply six Vampire training planes. In addition, he noted that when they discussed the other kinds of weapons which Israel was requesting[1] they would take into account to what extent Israel was exercising restraint on the borders. He also expressed criticism over the remarks of the prime minister in his conversation with Burns that Israel would know how to react to Arab aggression.[2] He recalled Britain's commitments to Jordan in the framework of the treaty between them, and added that this commitment also included Jerusalem. He noted that they were not convinced that Israel had done its utmost to prevent complications on the borders.

Elath replied that he too wished to talk with the foreign secretary following his statement in Parliament[3] and to express Israel's astonishment over his remarks to the effect that the balance of power was still in Israel's favour. By this declaration the secretary was taking a great responsibility upon himself since it would encourage the aggressive tendencies of the Arabs. Regarding the retaliatory raids, he said that Israel had no intention of doing anything which might aggravate the situation on the borders.

Elath suggests summoning the British chargé d'affaires and protesting to him about Lloyd's statement.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 210.
2. See No. 312.
3. In his reply to questions in the House of Commons posed both by the governing party and the opposition, requesting the cessation of the arms supply to Egypt and increasing the supply to Israel, Lloyd argued that the balance of forces in the region was to Israel's advantage. Following this statement Elath protested to the British Foreign Office claiming that this would encourage far-reaching political and security conclusions in Israel (See Elath to Myerson and British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 212, 4 July 1956,130.09/2321/4).
4. The major national party in Egypt before the rise of Nasser to power. It was declared illegal, like the other parties, after the officers' coup of 1952.
5. The British chargé d'affaires, Westlake, was summoned by the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, accompanied by the director-general of the Ministry of Defence. The two protested at the British refusal to supply arms to Israel and Peres even called it "a British embargo in practice on the supply of arms to Israel." He reiterated Israel's request for arms. Westlake agreed to convey this message to his superiors but rejected the expression "embargo" (See the Foreign Ministry to the Israel embassy in London, Tel. 928, 10 July 1956, 130/09/2321/3). Even before the above telegram arrived, Ben-Gurion speaking as minister of defence, published a declaration that he had not yet received an official notice about Lloyd's speech but the assumption ascribed to Lloyd of Israel's arms superiority was without foundation and Lloyd must know that (See the Foreign Ministry to the Israel embassy in London, Tel. 914, 4 July 1956,130.09/2321/3).

320. J. Tsur (Paris) to G. Myerson and the West European Division. 4 July 1956

Coded Tel. 91; Inc.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur reports on Bouabid's visit to the Israel embassy, conveying the Moroccan government's answer regarding relations with Israel.[1] Morocco believes that the time is not yet ripe to establish official relations, but he has been charged with maintaining personal contacts with Tsur to discuss issues of mutual interest to the two states. Tsur put forward a number of ideas for the interim stage, such as a unilateral decision by Israel to recognise Morocco, a congratulatory cable from the president of Israel to the sultan and representation of Morocco in Israel by the French embassy. Bouabid promised to convey the proposals to his government.

Notes

1. Tsur told Bouabid on 12 June that Israel was ready to recognise Morocco and to cooperate with it. Bouabid promised to convey this message to his government (See Tsur to Sharett, Tel. 955, 130.09/2346/5).
2. No continuation of this step has been found and whether Tsur returned this visit is not known.

321. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to E. Sasson (Rome). 5 July 1956

Copy; IMDEA 230/72/892

Summary

Ben-Gurion reacts to Sasson's letter to Yitzhak Navon.[3] He too believes that the Arab problem is important (although the Jewish problem in his view takes precedence), and indeed a consultation on this matter took place in his office on 2 July. To his regret he had not heard any concrete plan or proposal during this consultation; however he was not giving up and there would be further discussions to which the participants would be asked to come with conclusions of some kind.[6] At the beginning of the consultation that was held, Ben-Gurion had suggested studying several ways and means that were likely to lead to peace and cooperation with the Arabs. These are:

1. Finding circles and personalities in the Arab states who favour peace and cooperation.
2. Searching for contacts with non-Moslem and non-Arab minorities in the Arab countries.
3. Working towards close relations with the Christians in Lebanon.
4. Looking for circles in various countries opposed to Nasser's personal ambitions.
5. Looking at the possibility of strengthening the opposition to Nasser in Egypt proper.
6. Looking for ways to settle the refugees in the neighbouring countries or elsewhere.

Ben-Gurion concludes by saying that Sasson would shortly be summoned for consultations in Israel, and then an opportunity would be found for a wide-ranging and frank conversation on all these issues.

Notes

1. It was Sasson's custom to send Sharett letters warning of the ineffectiveness of the Foreign Ministry, in his view, in dealing with Arab affairs. Sharett summarised the argument between them in his diary as follows: "I explained to him [Sasson] the uselessness of trying to conduct Arab affairs from Rome while he was simultaneously acting as Israeli ambassador in Italy; rather it was necessary to manage these affairs in Jerusalem [...] to concentrate only on them, and to make visits to Europe. He on his part, explained why he was not ready now to take on responsibility for Arab matters." (See M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, Vol. 6, p. 1569 [Hebrew]). Most of Sasson's letters to Sharett are in file 130.02/2410/10.
2. In a Knesset debate on 19 June on the subject of Sharett's resignation Ben-Gurion said, among other things, "It was said yesterday that the prime minister conducted foreign affairs rather than the foreign minister This is in fact correct and I think that is the way it should be" (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 2066).
3. This letter not found.
4. Referring to the book *We and our Neighbours* [Hebrew] published 1931.
5. In a letter to the foreign minister of 1 July (IMDEA 230/22/892) Ben-Gurion arranged a meeting on 2 July to discuss a plan of activity in Arab affairs; taking part as well as the minister and Foreign Ministry officials were also others concerned with this area, including the head of the Central Institute for Intelligence and Security, I. Harel, and the head of Military Intelligence, Aluf Mishneh Y. Harkabi. Notes of this meeting not found, but from Ben-Gurion's words in the above account it is clear what was said.
6. The second meeting took place on 20 July and participants included Sasson, who was called home to take part, Harkabi and Eytan. They recommended that the Foreign Ministry continue to handle Arab affairs via a special department. They suggested a person of standing should head this department but a decision on a candidate was not reached (See Eytan to Ben-Gurion, 20 July 1956, 130.02/2399/2).

322. Press Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 6 July 1956

Circular Tel. 837; Outg.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denies the reports about the concentration of Israeli forces. The only concentrations of forces in the region are in fact those of the Arab states. These states compete among themselves in declarations about their intention to hasten to the help of Jordan, when they know that Jordan is in no danger of a war initiated by Israel, but rather from the intervention of Arab states in the unstable situation

in the Hashemite kingdom.[1] Their principal desire is to exert influence on the forthcoming elections.[2]

Notes

1. On 26 June King Hussein dissolved the Jordanian parliament after it became clear that there was no prospect of Sa'id al-Mufti gaining a vote of confidence of the House. The point of conflict was renewal of the agreement with Britain and continuation of aid from that country, when a majority of the representatives opposed renewal and supported receipt of aid from Arab countries, and not Britain.
2. On 30 June Jordanian Prime Minister al-Mufti resigned, and on 2 July Ibrahim Hashem was appointed prime minister of an interim government in order to prepare for general elections to be held on 21 October.

323. R. Shiloah (Washington) to J. Herzog. 7 July 1956

Original: 130.20/2475/5

Summary

Shiloah sums up the mood in the United States regarding the Middle East, after holding many talks with members of the Administration from the secretary of state down, and also with Jewish and non-Jewish public figures and representatives of the media.

His main impression is that, on the one hand, nothing is so much discussed as the Middle East, whereas on the other hand, there is no issue about which the Administration is so confused. The general feeling of people in the Administration and the public is that this region is the most dangerous in the world, and an explosion there is liable to cause a world war, or at least the intervention of American soldiers, as well as destroying the main plank in the forthcoming election campaign, which will be based on the slogan "peace and prosperity."

Nevertheless, the Administration is in a state of utter helplessness, confusion and lack of direction on this issue. The main reason is the central position of the president in the decision-making process, and as long as the president does not take part actively, there is no progress. An additional delaying factor is the character of Dulles, who usually deals with important matters in person, and does not keep his aides sufficiently informed.

With regard to the arms issue, the general feeling among the Americans is that Egypt and the other Arab states are growing stronger and there can be no doubting their aggressive intentions. Undeniably, there was a need to strengthen Israel and to restore the balance of forces that had been

undermined, but they do not accept the Israeli assumption that the coming summer will be a critical time. In their view the Egyptians have not yet absorbed the large quantity of arms they have received. Therefore the Americans must continue with the policy of referring Israel to purchase arms in France and Canada, and not be alarmed that matters are proceeding more slowly in Canada than they had anticipated. When considering the Israeli case in terms of the approaching elections, the Jewish vote did not have a decisive impact and Eisenhower's election for a further term of office is a foregone conclusion. Whilst it was true that in several instances of elections for members of the Senate and the House of Representatives the Jewish vote could prove decisive, the Republicans believe that if they present the details of their support for Israel and their efforts at arming it, this will be sufficient to preserve an acceptable level of Jewish support for the Republican party.

Shiloah concludes by saying that, despite the deadlock and the confusion, there is an ongoing debate over policy in the region, and ideas were being raised, for instance encouraging opposition to Nasser in Egypt, activity in Sudan, seeking contact with certain forces in Syria, and so forth. There was no clear plan, but in his opinion if Israel came up with a comprehensive and convincing plan, it would find an attentive ear in the Administration.

Notes

1. See No. 165.

324. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassies in Washington, Paris and London. 8 July 1956

Coded Tel. 841; Outg.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

Rafael cables a summary of the consultation with the minister of foreign affairs regarding the passage of the ship *Panagia* through the Suez Canal. The foreign minister would send a memorandum to the secretary-general,[2] and Eban was asked to meet with the president of the Security Council[3] and with the rest of the representatives, and also to hold a press conference at the United Nations as well as updating the press. The minister of foreign affairs would write to Burns and point out that the issue of the *Panagia* would necessarily have an impact on Israel's attitude to issues which he had raised in his conversation with the minister on July 6.[5] According to the

government's summation, every effort would be made for the ship to remain in Port Said at least until the arrival of the secretary-general.

Notes

1 See No. 308.
2. Sent via the Israel legation in Vienna with a request to transmit to Hammarskjöld. The message from the foreign minister stated, "I do not need to emphasise the far-reaching implications of the matter and the seriousness with which it is to be regarded" and expressed the hope that until his arrival in Israel he would "spare no effort to convince the Egyptian authorities of the need for the immediate termination of their unlawful interference (See Myerson to Bentsur in Vienna, Tel. 921, 8 July 1956, 130.02/2427/6).
3. Eban met the president of the Security Council, Nisot of Belgium, and said that Israel is not requesting a meeting "now" but does not exclude the possibility. Nisot replied that he noted the facts before him; however, in his view the Egyptian representative should not be contacted (See Kidron to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 408, 9 July 1956, 130.09/2373/1).
4. Kidron spoke to several members of the Security Council and, according to his report "everyone listened, with no special response except vague expressions of support" (See Kidron to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 411, 10 July 1956, ibid.).
5. For this conversation, see No. 325 (The letter, from 9 July, is in File 130.02/2427/6).
6. When Israeli efforts ended without result, Ben-Gurion decided, on 2 September, to bring back the *Panagia*. The captain received instructions to sail after protesting to the Egyptian authorities (See Lourie to the Israel embassies in London and Paris. 3 September 1956, 130.09/2327/4). On 5 September, Israel submitted a letter of protest to the president of the Security Council (93.03/3040/4).

325. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 8 July 1956

Coded Tel. TNWA439; Outg.: 130.02/2428/3

Summary

Tekoah reports on a meeting of the minister of foreign affairs with Burns. A number of subjects were discussed:
(1) freedom of movement of the observers in the demilitarized zone of Nitzana.[1] The minister of foreign affairs explained the restrictions imposed on the U.N. observers by Israel;
(2) the tension on the Jordanian border. Burns announced that he was aware that there were no concentrations of Israeli forces on the Jordan border;

(3) implementation of Article VIII of the armistice agreement. The minister of foreign affairs disagreed with Burns' interpretation of this article;[5]
(4) The fortifications in Hagovrim and Susita.[6] Burns reiterated his conclusion that some of the fortifications in the area should be destroyed. In conclusion, the minister of foreign affairs reiterated Israel's basic policy, which was readiness to implement the cease-fire agreements in full, while demanding that the Arabs also fulfil their obligations.

Notes

1. The letter of 6 July is in file 130.02/2436/8. See also No. 344, n. 3.
2. See No. 312.
3. See No. 322.
4. The letter of 5 July is in file 130.16/2948/7. The letter says that contrary to Ben-Gurion's interpretation that Article VIII gave Israel rights in several areas, for example renewal of activity in the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus and free access to the holy places, Burns believed that the only rights granted by Article VIII were that a special committee should consider formulation of special programmes and agreements on subjects to which "agreement on principle already exists" and the execution of which is conditioned by additional agreements.
5. See No. 330.
6. See No. 312 and n. 8 there.
7. See No. 332.
8. Concerning Israeli prisoners in Egypt, see No. 342, n. 9. According to Foreign Ministry reports, 6 Egyptian prisoners were returned during July and August (See the Foreign Ministry to Israel's representatives at the United Nations. 4 August 1956, 130.09/2321/1).

326. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 8 July 1956

Coded Tel. 140; Outg.: 130.09/2311/9

Summary

The telegram gives a report on a conversation of the minister of foreign affairs with Lawson. They began with reports of alleged Israeli troop concentrations on the Jordan border. The minister noted that everything stemmed from the Jordanian nervousness over Egyptian subversion and the Iraqi reaction against this. Lawson asked if Burns' visit to Amman had not contributed to the tension.[2] Myerson replied that the concentration of Iraqi forces on the Jordan border had preceded the Burns visit. She pointed out the numerous incidents on the border and said that if Israel had reacted

with force it would have been asked why it had not taken advantage of Burns' influence. Lawson proceeded to the question of the fortifications in Hagovrim. Myerson replied that they were intended for self-defence, in the light of mounting threats and Arab arming, and were not contrary to the armistice agreement. Lawson asked if there was any truth in reports of the addition of kibbutzim in Nitzana and observed that this matter was still pending in the Security Council. The minister replied that only one kibbutz was involved and asked why it was forbidden for Israel to develop agriculture in territory under its sovereignty.[4]

Notes

1. Telegram from the United States Division to the Israel embassy in Washington that conveyed, in brief, the principal subjects of the conversation under review (6 July 1956, 130.09/2311/9).
2. See No. 325.
3. The headline reads "Ben-Gurion asks U.N. curb Arabs." The article says that Ben-Gurion warned that the United Nations was responsible for putting an end to the Arab policy of terror towards Israel, and if not "Israel would punish the perpetrators of these crimes" (See press survey of the permanent representatives of Israel at the United Nations, 27 July 1956, 130.02/2448/5).
4. See No. 159, notes 1 and 5.
5. See No. 319 and n. 3 there.
6. A further telegram (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel embassy in Washington. Tel. 142. 8 July 1956. 130.02/2456/2) states that Lawson asked if stabilisation of the situation in Jordan, under Iraqi influence, would not be better for Israel than the present situation. Myerson replied that Iraq refused to sign the armistice agreement and, from a legal point of view, Israel could demand that it do so.

327. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Myerson. 10 July 1956

Coded Tel. WIA427; Outg.: 93.01/2213/1

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Dulles.
Eban began with a review of the aims of Israel's external and security policy, which was to prevent war and to protect the security of the state, while developing economically. At the heart of Israel's concern was Nasser's policy which aimed at regional domination. He also mentioned the restrictions in Suez and the tension with Jordan. In light of all this Israel was trying to obtain arms, but its efforts were encountering obstacles in the absence of any direct American action. The Canadians, for example,

say that if the Americans would only release a handful of planes, the gates of Canada will open. Why could the United States not take such a modest step? He also raised the question of the delay in supply of less important items and the lack of progress on the issue of pilot training.[6] All of this testified to the unhealthy state of relations. He also refuted two arguments, one of which, stated by Lloyd, claimed that Israel allegedly possessed military superiority,[7] and the second, by the State Department, alleged that Israel's aim was not to obtain arms but to entangle the United States in an uncomfortable international position. Finally, he mentioned the matter of the loan[8] and said that he would like to hear that there was no objection by the secretary and he would inform the bank to this effect.

In reply Dulles said that it was the United States' estimation that Israel had become stronger lately. Although Egypt had also become stronger, it had maintenance problems. He did not have the impression that the delay in Canada arose from American inaction. The Canadians had a plan for setting up a pool of several nations, such as Canada, Sweden, France, Italy and England, which would supply arms to Israel together. As far as he was aware they were not insisting that the United States be included in this group. As for himself, he was not sure that this plan would succeed. In any event, he was not certain that United States participation was vital to persuade Canada. He promised to contact the Canadians and clarify the situation. With regard to the items of secondary importance, he did not see any problem about releasing helicopters, Piper planes and troop carriers, and would discuss the matter.

Regarding the danger of an air attack, he said that it would be made clear to Egypt that an American response would come in the event of a surprise attack on Israel. The matter was under discussion and there was a chance of issuing such a clarification in the appropriate manner.

Regarding the loan, he did not see any reason to tie it to any political issue. It should be approved, if the plan was serious and there was no opposition from the State Department. Here Allen, who was present at the conversation, intervened, and Dulles corrected himself and said that the United States viewed the loan favourably, and if there were concomitant considerations, it would explain them to Israel.

Finally, he asked about the chances of the disintegration of Jordan. Eban replied that if the Iraqi army entered Jordan this would undermine the security balance upon which the armistice regime was based. The secretary did not take the hint, and reiterated his concern over the possible disintegration of Jordan. As they were leaving Allen said that he wished to tie up several loose ends from the conversation in a further talk. The secretary was not au fait with regard to the loan, but he was sure that it would be all right. A conversation with him was arranged.[13]

Notes

1. No. 317.
2. Dulles' answer not found; apparently not sent.
3. On the occasion of the British Army's evacuation from the Suez Canal Zone.
4. See No. 195.
5. See No. 317 and n. 4 there.
6. See No. 309.
7. See No. 319, n. 3.
8. See No. 287. Eban sent a telegram to the Foreign Ministry requesting instructions, in the event that Dulles, in his conversation, were to link agreement to a loan with a commitment by Israel to give the United States an additional season to find a solution to work in the demilitarized zone, supposing that such agreement would eliminate obstacles to a loan recommendation from the State Department. The Ministry answered that in that event Eban should reply that he would pass the matter on to his government recommending acceptance and that he expected his recommendation to be accepted, provided the U.S. government committed itself not to demand more than extension of non-renewal of work beyond the present season.
9. See No. 335.
10. See Allen's remarks in No. 338. The meeting with Hoover did not take place.
11. See No. 281 and n. 3 there.
12. See No. 363.
13. See No. 338.

328. Resumé of a Consultation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 10 July 1956

Copy: 130.02/2415/31

Summary

The consultation was held with regard to Israel's deployment in the Asian and African states and the minister of foreign affairs, the director-general, A. Lourie, D. Levin and Z. Shek took part.

It was decided to seize every opportunity to install an Israeli representative in any Asian state. They must also dispatch a permanent representative to Ceylon, send a consul to Accra[2] and explore the possibility of sending an unofficial representative to Delhi.[3] An attempt would be made to dispatch a special emissary for talks in Malaya and Singapore.[4] They must reinforce information activities by encouraging reciprocal visits.

Notes

1. On the agreement of Ceylon, in June 1956, to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, see No. 306, n. 3. Yaacov Shimoni, the minister in Burma, was appointed non-resident minister in Ceylon. The presentation of credentials was repeatedly postponed for a number of reasons, including the 1956 Sinai campaign, and only took place in September 1957.
2. An Israeli consulate was opened in Accra, capital of Ghana (Gold Coast) in November 1956. After independence in March 1957 the consulate was upgraded to an embassy and Chanan Yavor became the first Israeli ambassador to Ghana.
3. This suggestion was not carried out and Israel was content with a consulate in Bombay, established in 1953. The consul often visited Delhi.
4. The envoy was Moshe Sharett who was about to depart for the Far East to take part in the second conference of the socialist movements in Asia (in Bombay) and the 45th meeting of the Interparliamentary Union (in Bangkok). At the request of the Foreign Ministry he agreed to visit a number of countries in the region. The trip was defined as a goodwill mission or study tour (See Levin to Elath, 29 July 1956, 130.14/2561/5). The Foreign Ministry attached Eliashiv Ben-Horin, deputy director of the Asia and Africa Division, to Sharett. This trip lasted from September to December 1956 during which they visited India, Burma, the Philippines, Japan, Singapore, Malaya, Ceylon, Nepal, Laos and Cambodia. Sharett recorded his impressions in his book *An Asian Tour* [Hebrew]. In discussion with the Chief Minister of Malaya, 'Abd al-Rahman, Sharett raised the suggestion of instituting consular relations which would become diplomatic relations after independence. According to Sharett, the response was positive (See ibid., pp. 101-105). In 1959, 'Abd al-Rahman visited Australia and, in conversation with the Israeli ambassador there, M. Yuval, recalled his meeting with Sharett, and added: "The Muslim masses in our country are against you and therefore we cannot establish relations with you" (See Vol. 13, No. 489). Suggestions of establishing diplomatic relations with Singapore were raised a number of times but this did not occur. Only in 1969, when Singapore was already independent, was an Israeli embassy opened there (See Vol. 14, No. 455).

329. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division and the Asia and Africa Asia Division. 11 July 1956

Coded Tel. 360; Inc.: 130.09/2326/8

Summary

Avidar reports on his mission in China.[1] He visited the Deputy Foreign Minister Chang Hen Fu. The latter said that under the present circumstances the time was not ripe for establishing diplomatic relations between China and Israel. He expressed the hope that friendly relations between the two peoples would continue. Avidar mentioned the economic delegation from the previous year[2] and hinted at the possibility of a reciprocal visit. Chang

reiterated the hope for the development of friendly ties, but did not take the hint regarding a reciprocal delegation visit.[3]

Notes

1. Avidar's visit was presented as private but actually he was sent to sound out China's intentions towards Israel.
2. An Israeli economic delegation visited China on 23 and 24 February 1955. Heading the delegation was David Hacohen, Israeli minister in Burma at that time, another member was Daniel Levin, director of the Asia division.
3. A reciprocal delegation did not visit Israel.

330. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 12 July 1956

Coded Tel. 854; Outg.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

Burns was summoned by the minister of foreign affairs who reviewed the recent deterioration on the Jordanian border.[1] The question to be asked was whether Jordan still saw itself bound by the cease-fire obligations. The Jordanian chief of staff had taken the fedayeen activities under his wing. They supported them and even included them in the Jordanian army. The minister also asked if Burns had anything further regarding the Jordanian government's promise that had been conveyed the previous week.[2] Burns expressed regret over the casualties. He said that the Jordanian chief of staff had promised to take steps to prevent incidents. This was all he could say at present. He stressed that on the Jordanian side there had also been victims in the past 18 months. He understood the emotional reaction in Israel, but the situation did not warrant aggravating it by an Israeli action. An Israeli action on the lines of Qibiya or Nahlin would mean war. He suggested that Israel should concentrate on defence.

The minister of foreign affairs replied that Israel could not accept a situation in which its citizens were being killed.

In a later conversation with Burns, Tekoah suggested, on the instruction of the minister of foreign affairs, that Burns should report to the Security Council. Burns agreed, but pointed out that the publication of the report depended on Hammarskjöld's consent.

Notes

1. See details in Israel's letter to the president of the Security Council – No. 337.
2. See No. 325.
3. See No. 312.
4. See No. 331.

331. D. Ben-Gurion to Major-General E.L.M. Burns. 12 July 1956

Copy: 130.16/2948/7

Notes

1. See No. 325 and n. 5 there.
2. See No. 11 and n. 2 there.

332. G. Myerson to Major-General E.L.M. Burns. 12 July 1956

Copy: 130.16/2953/11

Notes

1. See No. 325.
2. This article states, amongst other things, that no aggressive action shall be planned or undertaken by either party to the armistice agreement by means of its armed forces against the people or the armed forces of the other party.
3. Which states, amongst other things, that the armistice demarcation line and the Demilitarized Zone were defined with a view to separating the armed forces of the two parties in such manner as to provide for the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the Demilitarized Zone…the chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission and United Nations observers attached to the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this article.
4. In his reply to Myerson (24 July, in File 130.16/2953/11) Burns again demanded that the fortifications be demolished, and when this was not done, sent a further letter (15 August, in File 130.02/2440/9) demanding to be informed of the Israel government's attitude to his demand for demolition of the fortifications by 31 August.

333. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 12 July 1956

Coded Tel. 214; Inc.: 130.09/2326/6

Summary

The division reports on the minister of foreign affairs' conversation with Soviet Ambassador Abramov.

She began with a report on the ministerial committee's discussion regarding the Russian property. They were seeking a solution to the question agreeable to both sides. She proceeded to the situation on the Jordan border, and described her conversation with Burns.[2] Abramov asked when the prime minister's remarks were conveyed to Jordan and about the timing of Burns' reply regarding the beginning of the Arab forces' concentration on the border.[3] The minister of foreign affairs added that Israel was alarmed by the concentration of forces and the aggressive statements of the Arab states. She noted that she and her government colleagues were convinced of the Soviet Union's sincere intention to preserve the peace. At the same time, the huge quantities of arms flowing to the Arabs present a danger, and no force in the world would prevent them from using them.

Abramov replied that he would convey her remarks precisely and objectively to his government.

Notes

1. On the discussions concerning Russian property at the government meeting of 16 September, and for the developments that followed, see No. 399 and n. 2.
2. See No. 312.
3. See No. 325.

334. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the Economic Division and the East European Division. 12 July 1956

Coded Tel. 374; Inc.: 130.09/2326/8

Summary

Avidar reports on a conversation with the deputy minister for external trade, who handed over a memorandum in answer to Israel's letter of 23 May[1] concerning its desire to sign a trade agreement with the Soviet

Union. The memorandum expressed satisfaction regarding the expansion of trade relations between the two states, but said that a trade agreement was only possible if Israel suggested commodities that the Soviet Union was interested in. Until now Israel had not presented such commodities. In a conversation that was held afterwards the deputy minister pointed out that the answer did not close the door to a trade agreement in the future, when Israel proposed suitable commodities.

Notes

1. In the letter Israel suggested to the U.S.S.R. the signature of a commercial agreement. See No. 254, n. 3.
2. See No. 343 and n. 1 there.

335. M. Comay (Ottawa) to G. Myerson. 13 July 1956

Coded Tel. 230; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Comay cables about a conversation with Pearson, who told him that the Canadian government had decided the previous day to approve the supply of planes to Israel, but at present only in cooperation with the United States. An announcement to this effect had been conveyed to the United States and he was waiting for Dulles' response in the next few days. Comay responded that this news was a blow to the Israeli government. Pearson replied that this was not the last word. They must take this stand towards the United States, but if the Americans did not change their mind they would be ready to reconsider.

Notes

1. See No. 303, n.1.
2. Meeting of British Commonwealth heads of government in London on 1 July.
3. Muhammad Ali, prime minister of Pakistan.

336. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 13 July 1956

Coded Tel. 264; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Summary

Elath cables about his conversation with Lloyd. According to the instructions he had received,[1] Elath began by stressing the special responsibility Britain bore for the results of the increasing Jordanian aggression and the danger this could pose for Israel-Britain relations. Lloyd replied that Britain was making efforts to persuade the Jordanians to improve the situation on the border. He had faith in the intention of the Jordanians and their army to prevent the deterioration of relations with Israel.

Elath then proceeded to the question of the supply of arms and reiterated the demands made by Israel in the past.[4] Lloyd responded that if Britain were now to approve arms to Israel, it would give the impression that Britain had been panicked by the press conference held by the Israeli embassy and had capitulated to its pressure.[5] Elath replied that Israel had no choice but to appeal to the public. Israel had been waiting for the Centurions for three years, and there had been more than enough time to examine and consider, but these weapons had still not been released. Lloyd responded that if Britain had released tanks to Israel, the Soviets would have sent a double quantity to Nasser, Elath responded that this was not a justification for refusing to supply defensive weapons to Israel, and that they were obliged under the Tripartite Declaration to ensure that the balance of forces in the region was maintained.

The impression that Elath gained from the conversation was that no change in the British arms supply policy to Israel was foreseeable. This policy depended on the position of the United States and not on the reasons that Lloyd had given him. In spite of this he saw in the contradictions in his remarks a sign of weakness, and this indicated the need for exerting constant public pressure.

Notes

1. In these telegrams, of 10 and 12 July (See file 130.09/2321/3), Elath is instructed to meet Lloyd to describe the tense situation on the Jordan border and to raise again the question of arms supply.
2. See No. 319.
3. Referring to the conversation between Eytan and Westlake, additional to that of the previous day (See No. 319, n. 5). This conversation was held by Eytan on the

instructions of Ben-Gurion following incidents on the Jordanian border. Eytan quoted a telegram of Elath (No. 319), and noted that Kirkpatrick's statement on his lack of confidence in the determination of the Legion to halt these dangerous developments threw light on the latest incidents. "We must understand from this that Jordan intends to provoke us into war and produce via provocative incidents a situation that will involve Britain" (See British Commonwealth Division to the Israel embassy in London, Tel. 931, 130.09/2321/3. 10 July 1956).

4. See No. 319, n. 5.
5. On 7 July, Elath held a press conference where he responded to Lloyd's statement that the balance of forces in the Middle East was in Israel's favour. Among other things, he remarked that Lloyd's words could have a catastrophic effect on Israel-Arab relations and were likely to lead to an Arab attack. He called for the supply of arms to Israel to prevent such an attack and added that Israel had no intention of attacking its neighbours. The embassy also issued a press briefing stating that "qualitative equality of arms is imperative to Israel though she does not insist on absolute quantitative equality with the Arab states" (See the embassy in London to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 240, 9 July 1956, 130.09/ 2321/4, and Foreign Ministry document, 7 July 1956, 130.02/2456/2).
6. Document concerning verbal exchanges between Lloyd and Labour M.P. Alfred Robens not found. According to a later document (Telegram from Elath to the Foreign Ministry. Tel. 300, 23 July 1956, 130.09/2321/4). Robens asked Lloyd on 23 July to explain how Lloyd could have informed Parliament of Israel's superiority in arms when at the same time the Israeli government was denying this factually. Lloyd replied: "One has to take into account the current availability of the bomber and fighter forces which may be available to Israel" (See Schneerson to Avner, 26 July 1956, 93.04/325/5).
7. News supplied by the French stating that at a meeting of NEACC on 3 July the British were especially opposed to any arms supply to Israel at that time (See British Commonwealth Division to Elath, Tel. 942, 12 July 1956, 130.09/2321/3).
8. See No. 277 (Editorial Note).

337. M. Kidron [New York] to the President of the Security Council (New York). 16 July 1956

Copy: 93.08/410/19

Note

1. Rafael instructed Kidron to submit the letter as soon as possible so that it should be circulated among the Security Council members before the U.N. secretary-general's visit to Israel and should receive press attention (See Rafael's telegram, No. 41, 15 July 1956, 130/09/2332/1).

338. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 16 July 1956

Coded Tel. WIA442; Outg.:93.01/2213/1

Summary

Eban reports on his meeting with Allen, which was a follow-up to his conversation with Dulles.[1] A number of issues were discussed, among them:

(a) Canada – the United States ambassador will meet with Pearson shortly and will clarify what exactly the United States must do in order for Canada to accede to Israel's request;[2]

(b) arms purchase in France – at a meeting of the Three Powers in Washington, the French reported on arms which they had sold to Israel and which they intended to sell. The American reaction was positive, and they indicated that they would view favourably the sale of arms to Israel. Allen noted that the French claim that the United States was hindering the sale of French arms to Israel was not true;

(c) the loan from the Export-Import Bank – he said that the State Department had asked the Bank to expedite its conclusions.

Notes

1. No. 327.
2. See No. 353.

339. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 17 July 1956

Coded Tel. WIA452; Outg.:93.01/2213/1

Summary

Eban sums up the situation in the United States regarding Israel's arms requests. The Administration officials believe that Israel's situation is not so bad. They know about its arms purchases in other countries and in their opinion Israel has become stronger. They also do not accept the assumption that Nasser will attack in the summer, and therefore the arms purchasing campaigns must be concluded quickly. At the same time they consider

that there is still a need to increase Israel's strength and are convinced that France will continue to sell arms, as indicated in the debate in the NEACC tripartite commission which had sat the previous week in Washington.[3] On the other hand, they are angry about the Canadian delay which they attribute to the Prime Minister St. Laurent, whom they describe as cantankerous and full of complaints about the United States. The Americans do not accept the Israeli assumption that the United States holds the key to arms purchases in Britain. As they see it, if the United States sells to Israel, the British will say that they are exempt from doing so. They maintain that Lloyd had promised to sell anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Israel irrespective of United States actions. They see the main chance in Canada, and will try to meet the Canadian demand for releasing equipment in the United States without departing from the modest framework of traditional supply – helicopters, Piper aircraft, spare parts for tanks and perhaps troop carriers. All of this, together with training sites, offshore permits and foregoing the Mystères destined for the United States, together amount to a large quantity of aid.

These arguments make an impression on Israel's friends, and against this background the embassy is once again embarking on public activity. This week they intend to activate the Scott group,[6] an effort will be made for leading articles to appear in the coming week, and a meeting of the Jewish organisations with Dulles was also scheduled.[7]

Notes

1. See Nos. 327 and 338. Report on conversation with Russell not found.
2. See No. 319 and n. 3 there.
3. See No. 338.
4. The SSIO anti-tank missile was produced by France. According to the November 1955 agreement the French were to supply them to Israel at the rate of 50 per month, beginning December 1956 (See Tsur and Peres in Paris to Ben-Gurion, Sharett and Dayan. Tel. 42, 4 November 1955, 130.02/2457/9). Eban reported to the Foreign Ministry (Tel. WIA 453, 13 July 1956, 93.01/2213/1) that the subject of missile supply was discussed at a NEACC meeting, with the British opposing because of the new and aggressive nature of this weapon, and the Americans supported them. They also asserted that the number Israel requested, more than 800, appeared exaggerated. It may be assumed that those missiles were supplied to Israel after France decided to supply weapons without consultation with Britain and the United States.
5. See No. 166.
6. Hugh Scott, a member of the House of Representatives, headed a group of 40 members of this House that sent a letter on 3 February to Dulles requesting the supply to Israel of defensive weapons (See No. 77, n. 3). On Eban's initiative Scott met Dulles who said that he wanted to produce a situation that would remove the problem of Israel from the U.S. election campaigns. He pointed out that after 4 years of Republican government Israel was stronger than it had been previously. Therefore he expected Scott and his colleagues to defend him and explain to the public that the

administration was friendly to Israel (See Eban to the Foreign Ministry. Tel. 499, 27 July 1956, 130.09/2311/11).

7. See Herlitz' report of Eban's meeting with the Presidents' Conference of 5 July (in File 130.20/2460/4, document of 13 July). At this meeting Eban recounted the impasse that Israel had arrived at with regard to the request for arms in the United States and countries of the West. It was decided that members of the Conference would ask for a meeting with the secretary of state and would also send a delegation to the president. Apparently these initiatives were not pursued.

340. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Legation in Warsaw. 17 July 1956

Coded Tel. 513; Outg.: 130.09/2306/8

Summary

The division reports a conversation of the minister of foreign affairs with the Polish chargé d'affaires, Slowikowski. He explained that Poland did not intend to permit mass emigration but only to ease restrictions and to act in a liberal manner.[1] Poland would do all it could to suppress antisemitism, which only reactionary elements were tainted with. There was interest in Israel among the public, which had found expression in the welcome accorded to the young people at the youth festival.[2] He supports the expansion of trade and cultural ties. He hopes that the status of relations would be upgraded.

Notes

1. Avidan reported to the Foreign Ministry (Tel. 636, 9 July 1956, 130.09/2306/10) that according to his information the Polish government had decided not to allow large scale Jewish emigration and to instruct those responsible for execution of policy not to interpret the decision reached on re-unification of families two months previously as large-scale emigration. See also No. 251 and n.1 there.
2. An Israel delegation participated in the youth festival that took place in Warsaw in August 1955.
3. The subject of emigration of orphans was raised by Eytan with the Polish deputy foreign minister. See No. 284, n. 1.

341. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 18 July 1956

Coded Tel. IW179; Outg.: 130.02/2455/5

Summary

The division reports on a meeting which took place between Ambassador Lawson and the minister of foreign affairs at the ambassador's urgent request. The ambassador gave a verbal message from the State Department expressing concern that Israel might react with force to the latest incidents on the Jordan border.[1] The message asserts that the incidents did not justify a reaction of force. An Israeli action would have a prejudicial effect on the visit of the UN secretary-general and Israel's efforts to obtain arms in the United States and other countries. The United States was clarifying the situation with Jordan and had reason to believe that Jordan is making vigorous and apparently sincere efforts to halt the incidents. Lawson added explanations which he described as "personal" on factors which might have led to the message: rumours in the press, and Hammarskjöld might have had contacts with the State Department. He had possibly received an assurance from the Russians to put pressure on the Arabs to refrain from incidents.[2]

In reply, the minister of foreign affairs said that she was "shocked" by this message. Israel had exercised restraint in the face of many violations of the armistice. In particular she was indignant that the Americans were linking their appeal with the secretary-general's visit and the chances of Israel's arms requests. Israel's arms purchasing efforts had been in vain, and the secretary-general's promises in the past had proven worthless. The conversation then focused on Israel's reprisal policy and Nasser's intentions.

At the end of the conversation the minister stressed that only appropriate arms in Israel's hands could ensure peace in the region.

Notes

1. Lawson was instructed to pass a verbal message to Myerson at Dulles' request. It appears that the State Department was concerned at information which had reached it that the government had decided at a meeting on 3 July to allow Ben-Gurion take such action as he saw fit if there were serious incidents on the Jordanian border (See *FRUS, 1955-57*, Vol. XV, Nos. 460, 461). The formulation of the government decision was as follows: "It was decided (by a majority) to authorise the minister of defence to give orders for a suitable response on lines decided at the meeting." Other suggestions to limit operations until after Hammarskjöld's arrival or to convene the

government before each operation were not accepted (See stenographic record of the government meeting, 11 July 1956, ISA).

2. At the beginning of July 1956 Hammarskjöld visited the Soviet Union. According to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Shepilov, the Soviet leaders emphasised in their discussions with him that they had a great desire to bring about a break in the tension in the Middle East and would support Hammarskjöld and the United Nations fully in any steps that they took to that end. Hammarskjöld said at a press conference that the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict should be agreed between the parties, it could not be forced upon them and was not a matter for mediation (See *Ha'aretz*, 6 July 1956). See also No. 342.
3. On 13 July, a passenger vehicle was attacked on the road between Yahud and Wilhelma and the driver killed.

342. Meeting: W. Eytan – D. Hammarskjöld (Jerusalem, 19 July 1956)

Copy: 93.08/410/5

Eytan reports on a conversation he held with Hammarskjöld when he entertained him for a meal in his home. Hammarskjöld began by describing his visit to the Soviet Union. He had been favourably impressed by Shepilov who represented a new type of Soviet statesman. Shepilov told him unequivocally that the Soviet Union would support all his efforts to promote greater understanding between Israel and the Arabs, and that it was in favour of inviting the two sides to direct negotiations. Eytan replied that he too had received the impression[2] that the Russians wished to prevent war in the Middle East and would be happy for the Israel-Arab conflict to be ended, and that the point of departure in their Middle East policy was not anti-Israel. Hammarskjöld told him that he had discussed Israel's reprisal policy with Ben-Gurion[4] and had tried to persuade him that this policy was ineffective and that it sullied Israel's good name. Eytan adds that Hammarskjöld is convinced that there is room today to talk with Nasser about improving relations with Israel. This is due to the strengthening of Nasser's position in the wake of the recent elections in Egypt and the ratification of the constitution. They also talked about several practical problems in relations between Israel and Egypt (the arrest of an Israeli sailor in Alexandria,[7] the arrest of the *Panagia*[8] and Israeli POWs in Egypt[9]).

Notes

1. See No. 313 and n.1 there.
2. Eytan visited Moscow in June 1956 – see No. 288.

3. Four paragraphs of Hammarskjöld's impressions of his visit to Eastern Europe are not printed here.
4. See No. 344.
5. See No. 305.
6. See No. 299.
7. On 7 July an Israeli seaman was arrested on a Swedish ship that anchored in Alexandria. Efforts to free him by the Swedish consul failed. Israel turned to the Swedish Foreign Ministry and the Swedish minister in Israel with a request to secure his release.
8. See No. 281 and notes there.
9. At that time Egypt held 3 Israeli detainees: a soldier taken prisoner on September 1955 in the vicinity of Rafiah and 2 policemen taken prisoner on 26 October 1955 in the Demilitarized Zone of Nitzana.

343. Memorandum by A. Miron (Jerusalem), 19 July 1956

Copy: 130.11/2512/1

Summary

Miron sums up the situation regarding trade relations with the Soviet Union, following a conversation with the minister of trade and industry in light of the signing of an agreement to supply fuel.[1]

For some time now Israel has been holding negotiations with the Russians for signing a trade agreement, and had even sent a letter. Following the letter the Israeli ambassador was summoned for a talk and was told that the Russians were not interested in the goods that Israel proposed. If Israel suggested other goods, they would be ready to consider signing an agreement.[2] In talks in the office of the minister of trade and industry, the idea was mooted to invite a Russian delegation to Israel to enable it to get to know Israeli industry and its ability to export goods which might interest them.

Notes

1. On 17 July 1956 fuel agreements were signed in Moscow between the Israeli companies Delek and Yarden and the Soviet company Soyuzneft Export, by which the Israeli companies would buy 300,000 tons of fuel oil (mazut) and 220,000 tons of crude oil in 1957 and 350,000 and 270,000 tons in 1958 respectively (See Sherman to Eban, 23 August 1956, 130.02/2456/6). The U.S.S.R. encountered a negative reaction to this deal by the Arab states and therefore tried to make light of its importance. Shepilov told journalists on 21 July that "the oil deal was only an unimportant trade agreement to which, unfortunately, some people gave exaggerated significance" (See Y. Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet Relations*, p. 100). This deal was cancelled

following the Sinai campaign. In parallel with talks on the oil deal the Israeli firms Nefta and Metzada held talks with the Soviet company Machinoexport on a drilling equipment purchase. It was agreed to exchange letters but before a contract could be signed the Soviet firm announced that it could not supply the equipment because of excessive orders (See Chelouche to Kosloff and others, Tel. 484, 27 August 1956, 130/09/2326/7).

2. See No. 334.

344. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassies in Washington and London. 20 July 1956

Coded Tel. TNW453 (Washington); Outg.: 130.09/2321/3

Summary

Tekoah reports on a conversation between the U.N. secretary-general and the prime minister, at which the minister of foreign affairs and Burns were present. They began with the issue of freedom of movement of the observers in the demilitarized zone of Nitzana.[1] The prime minister said that as long as Article VIII of the armistice agreement was inoperative the U.N. observers had no reason to be in the demilitarized zone. Hammarskjöld said that the new measure was liable to prejudice the chances of his talks in Egypt. Ben-Gurion said that he was prepared to consider this and would not press just now for removing the observers, but the restrictions imposed would remain in effect.

They then proceeded to discuss the situation on the Jordanian border. The prime minister agreed to exhaust political efforts to halt the aggression, but if these proved ineffective, reprisal raids would resume.

They discussed the application of Article VIII of the armistice agreement with Jordan. The prime minister called for its implementation.

Notes

1. See No. 325.
2. See No. 342.
3. See No. 325.
4. See No. 308.
5. See No. 345, n. 8 and No. 342, n. 9.

345. A. Eban (Jerusalem) to G. Myerson and J. Herzog. 20 July 1956

Coded Tel. XA440; Outg.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

In a personal cable to the minister of foreign affairs and Herzog, Eban analyses the change that has taken place in United States policy.

The reneging of the United States on its promise to carry through the Aswan plan represents in his view a decisive stage in the process of its disappointment with Nasser. In the past few months the Administration and the public had come to realise that Nasser was countenancing aggression and dangerous manoeuvring between the powers which would lead to Soviet penetration of the Middle East. Israel had been alone in adopting this position several months ago, and now it transpired that its views had taken root in the political thinking of the United States and its allies. The American reversal would greatly deflate Nasser's international image and would teach other states that there was no long-term advantage to be gained from the methods of extortionist competition that Nasser had adopted towards the West and East.[5] If Israel succeeded in finally negotiating the loan from the Export-Import Bank, the difference in attitude between Israel and Egypt was likely to raise Israel's prestige in the world and in the Arab states. Israel had also contributed to the American policy reversal when it had pointed out to them that it was impossible to undertake the Aswan plan without the consent of the states affected (Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda). Byroade's elimination, the oil agreement which Israel had signed with the Soviet Union, the chance of a loan from the Export-Import Bank, and the recruiting of the United States to persuade Canada to sell planes marked an exceptional moment in Israel's political relations. Non-Israeli considerations had played an important part in this change, but there were firm grounds for assuming that Israel's thinking had also made an impression on the secretary of state, together with political activity in an election year that had been carried out via discreet channels. It was extremely vital to continue with this line in order to exploit a real opportunity which had perhaps opened up for Israel to weaken the enemy's international standing and strengthen its own. He asks for comments on this analysis.[6]

Notes

1. On 19 July 1956 Dulles notified the Egyptian ambassador in Washington, Ahmad Hussein, of his government's decision not to take part in funding the Aswan Dam.

The main reasons given were that the programme involved huge financial burdens for Egypt and further, the inability of Egypt to reach agreement with the other Nile countries, Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda (See *FRUS, 1956-1957*, Vol. XV, No. 478).
2. See No. 165.
3. The celebrations following the withdrawal of the British Army from the Canal Zone.
4. Henry Byroade served as American ambassador in Egypt from 1955 to September 1956. He favoured warm relations between the United States and Egypt.
5. See Eban to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 459, 18, July 1956, 93.01/2215/1.
6. The reply from the United States Division stated, among other things, "Your expectations of the past few months of a change in direction proved well-founded. It would be best not to make public our contributions of pressure and influence because Nasser would use this as a means of escape from his disappointment in the face of Arab public opinion, and the background [to this change] of a United States-Egyptian confrontation because of his anti-Western stand would become less obvious" (See United States Division to Eban, Tel. 201, 23 July 1956, 130.09/2311/9).

346. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 22 July 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 883; Outg.: 130.09/2377/3

Summary

The ministry refers to the statement issued at the end of the discussions of the Brioni Conference.[1] It was decided not to react in order not to highlight Nasser's achievements, but the missions should try to get newpapers in Israel and abroad to condemn the statement, as based on a solution dictated by U.N. resolutions adopted in circumstances that no longer prevailed and which ignored the principle of the U.N. Charter, calling for an agreed solution, between the sides. The decision on the Palestine issue at Bandung also disregards the Bandung principles themselves and the declarations made by the Russians.[2,3,4] The Brioni statement only encourages Arab intransigence and warlike tendencies.[5]

Notes

1. On the Bandung decision, see No. 209, n.6. The conference at Brioni in Yugoslavia took place on 18-19 July and Tito, Nasser and Nehru participated.
2. See No. 205.
3. See No. 225.
4. In a joint statement issued in Moscow on 19 May, at the end of a visit by the French prime minister and foreign ministers, it was stated, among other things, that the two states committed themselves to give the United Nations the necessary support in its

efforts to strengthen peace in Palestine and in carrying out resolutions to be adopted by the Security Council on this subject.

5. In additional discussions between the Foreign Ministry and the consulate in Belgrade it was decided to send a protest letter to Yugoslavia. This letter was drafted but Ben-Gurion rejected it and substituted his own draft which ignored the Brioni affair and invited Tito to visit Israel. This letter was given to Tito by the Minister of Labour, Mordechai Namir, who headed the parliamentary delegation to Yugoslavia in October 1956 (See draft of 18 October in File 130.11/2510/7, and the version transmitted by Foreign Ministry telegram to the consulate in Belgrade, Tel. 327, 18 October 1956, ibid.).
6. At a meeting with Foreign Minister Popovic the latter tried to minimise the importance of the declaration which was a compromise with Nasser. Yugoslavia intended to support the spirit of Bandung in general and on the question of Palestine to support "a peaceful solution." According to him Nehru too agreed that the Egyptians had no right to take extreme measures and certainly not to use force or far-reaching political steps (See the Israeli legation in Belgrade to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 361, 25 July 1956, 130.09/2298/13).

347. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 23 July 1956

Coded Tel. 246; Inc.: 130.09/2326/6

Summary

The division reports on an interview of Soviet Ambassador Abramov with the minister of foreign affairs, in which he handed her a letter from the Supreme Soviet for the Speaker of the Knesset, which included a call for an end to the arms race, for reduction of the armed forces and for a ban on atomic weapons.[1] The minister of foreign affairs responded that, to her regret, Israel now found itself in the reverse situation, since the armed might of its neighbours obliged it to arm itself. Abramov replied that the call was mainly aimed at the Great Powers who should serve as an example and ban atomic weapons. Afterwards the ambassador asked about the Hammarskjöld visit and received a report on the latest border incidents.[5]

Notes

1. The Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities constituted the Supreme Soviet, the parliament of the Soviet Union. The letter was distributed to all the world's parliaments. The translation of the letter, issued on 16 July 1956, is in File 130.11/2512/14. The document was distributed to all members of the Knesset. A copy was sent to Myerson who wrote on the margin to Elath and Eshel. "Perhaps worthwhile to inform Abramov that the Knesset chairman had sent a copy to all

members of the Knesset, and to take the opportunity to express surprise that the name Israel does not appear among the states presented with this decision. G.M." On 10 August the Foreign Ministry sent a letter to the Soviet embassy conveying surprise that the Soviet press did not publicise that the Soviet letter was also sent to Israel (See ibid.). See also No. 399.

2. See No. 342.
3. See No. 344.
4. See No. 295 and n. 2 there.
5. Which describes the incident that occurred close to Mevasseret Jerusalem on 22 July when a mine was laid close to labourers working on road repair, and the incident of 23 July when a grenade was thrown at the children's house at Kibbutz Ma'ale Hahamisha.

348. D. Hammarskjöld (Geneva) to D. Ben-Gurion. 24 July 1956

Copy: 130.16/2949/3

Notes

1. See No. 344.
2. For Ben-Gurion's reply see No. 357.

349. Note for the Record by W. Eytan (Jerusalem, 25 July 1956)

Copy: 130.02/2404/4

Summary

Eytan summarises Ben-Gurion's impressions of Hammarsjköld's visit to Israel.

1. The secretary-general promised that he would approach the Russians again regarding the resumption of the work in the Jordan channel.[1] His aim would be to obtain agreement among the four Powers, by finding a solution which would make it possible to resume the work and save the Arabs' face.

2. The secretary-general tried to justify the recent Security Council resolution.[2]

3. The secretary-general's aim was to improve relations in the region by ensuring a ceasefire and the armistice, stopping the Egyptian sea blockade and negotiations according to Article XII.[3]

The prime minister had gained the impression that the secretary-general is acting with the consent of the Russians and in accordance with the will of the British. His relations with the United States are less good. He sees the Israel-Arab issue as the mission of his life.

Notes

1. The Soviet veto of 22 January 1954 thwarted a resolution presented by the three western Powers to the Security Council which would have allowed Israel to continue working on the diversion of the Jordan river channel. See Vol. 9, No. 28 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 273.
3. This paragraph of the armistice agreement with Egypt and Jordan allowed the sides, by mutual agreement, to amend any of its conditions providing this did not alter any of the principal paragraphs, and among them paragraphs I and II.
4. At the Security Council meeting on 31 May, Shuqairi, the Syrian representative, said, among other things, that the agreement acceptable to the parties would be possible only after the elimination of Israel and cancellation of its membership of the United Nations.
5. See No. 348.

350. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Myerson. 26 July 1956

Coded Tel. WIA490; Outg.: 93.01/2213/1

Summary

Eban replies to a cable from the minister of foreign affairs.[1] The convening of the Security Council at the secretary-general's initiative is not desirable. It would create the impression that Israel and the Jordanians were being dragged to court. There would be a freeze on the purchase of planes in Canada and perhaps on other operations. On the other hand, he prefers that Israel should initiate the convening of the Council, since the party who initiates the convening displays confidence, exerts parliamentary control and oversees the phrasing of the resolution. Despite this, he doubted whether Israel would manage to obtain anything more than a resolution expressing concern over the situation and an appeal to the sides to honour the armistice agreements. To sum up: he will check how this step would affect the negotiations in Canada.[2] This is the crucial consideration.

Notes

1. In this telegram Myerson noted receipt of a message from Hammarskjöld on the situation on the Jordanian border. In this the secretary-general noted that possibly he would be compelled to report the latest developments on the border to the Security Council. He asked Israel to take immediate steps to prevent repetition of these incidents. An identical message was sent to Jordan. She intended to say to Burns that Israel was not opposed to the secretary-general bringing the matter to the Security Council, but it was his responsibility to report accurately on developments. He should state that she had repeatedly requested from Burns to report to the Council. Additionally she would tell Burns that Israel was itself considering raising the matter at the Council. Myerson asked Eban, both on her behalf and that of the prime minister, what he thought of this idea (Telegram from Myerson of 26 July 1956 in File 130.09/2311/9. Hammarskjöld's message is in the telegram from Tekoah to the Israel missions abroad, 27 July 1956. 130.02/2448/5).
2. Eban cabled (Tel. WIA. 492, 21 July 1956, 93.01/2313/1) that, in Comay's opinion, "it would be desirable if a whole week could elapse without a meeting of the Security Council" and therefore Israel should do no more than send a letter to the president of the Council (See the permanent representatives to the United Nations to the Foreign Ministry, 26 July 1956, 130.02/2448/5 and see also No. 337). Eban spoke to the secretary-general on 22 July. The latter summed up his journey to Israel and said that it was his duty to do all he could to put an end to the unstable situation on the Jordanian border. He hoped his sudden return to New York, together with his report to the Security Council would be enough. If not there would be a need for a Council meeting. Eban replied that Israel had no interest in a meeting at that time, although, if one was inevitable, Israel would request it as it saw itself as the injured party. After this conversation Hammarskjöld phoned and said that he had advised Jordan (and he also recommended Israel) not to convene the Council (See Kidron to the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 458, 28 July 1956, 130.09/2333/1).

351. Editorial Note

Nasser's Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company

In a speech at Alexandria on 26 July, on the occasion of Revolution Day, Nasser made the following announcement:
(a) The Egyptian government had decided to nationalise the Suez Canal company, and would use its income, \$100 million dollars a year, to finance the building of the Aswan Dam.
(b) The shareholders of the company would be compensated on the basis of the final closing price of the Paris stock exchange.

Nasser claimed that there was a conspiracy between the United States, Britain and the World Bank to induce Egypt to begin building the dam, and then to force on it conditions undermining Egypt's independence and integrity.

On the same day he published the Nationalisation Decree and it was decided that the Trade Minister would be responsible for its execution. An order was also published appointing an administrative body consisting of 12 members, all Egyptians, to operate the Canal.

On 31 July Nasser informed the embassies in Cairo that freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal would not be adversely affected by the nationalisation.

On 29 July talks opened in London between the foreign ministers of the three Western Powers to formulate a united response to the nationalisation of the canal. The talks ended on 3 August with the decision that Britain would convene a conference which would set up an international body to ensure security and freedom of passage through the Canal to all states, while taking Egypt's interests into consideration. The signatories to the Constantinople Convention of 1888 and other states with an interest in the Canal, whether as shareholders or users, were invited to the conference, which consisted of 24 states. Israel was not invited. See also No. 366.

352. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 27 July 1956

Coded Tel. 206; Inc.: 130.02/2409/5

Summary

Tsur reports on reaction in Paris to the nationalisation of the Canal. The government was convening to discuss the situation. A public statement just issued said that Nasser's action was contrary to international law and that France was consulting with its allies and would take care to protect its interests and those of its citizens. Tsur also lists several lines for explanation that Israel should adopt, whose main thrust was that Nasser's policy had failed and he had no options except to nationalise the Canal, and that the step was a result of the cowardly and hesitant stance of the Powers on the issue of freedom of navigation.

Notes

1. See No. 372.
2. Mosaddeq nationalised the British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951.

353. M. Comay (Ottawa) to G. Meir. 27 July 1956

Coded Tel. ZT245; Inc.: 130.02/2456/2

Notes

1. Even before this telegram was sent, Eban reported that the United States and Canada were close to agreement on supply of the planes, but Nasser's nationalisation of the Canal was causing difficulties in publication of the deal, which might be interpreted as retaliation for Nasser's step (see Eban to Herzog, Tel. WIA 485, 25 July 1956, 93.01/2213/1).
2. Such an announcement was not published.
3. A detailed report on the conversation is in File 130.00/2456/2.

354. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 27 July 1956

Coded Tel. 211; Outg.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur cables that the Moroccan government had decided to permit emigration on two conditions – that the Jews would leave in groups of 200 or 300 people and that their departure would be without any publicity.[1] In light of developments he suggests postponing publicity and public action for the present.[2]

Notes

1. This permission was given after negotiations between members of the World Jewish Congress and representatives of Morocco. At first the Moroccans demanded that the emigrants give up their Moroccan citizenship, but representatives of the Congress opposed this. It was agreed only that the emigrants should sign a declaration that they did not owe money either to private individuals or the government of Morocco (See telegrams 106, 125 and 356, July–August 1956, 130.09/2347/2).
2. Before this, Tsur had suggested that if Morocco did not allow the resumption of emigration, a public campaign should be mounted enlisting Jewish organisations in the United States, the press, the State Department and the French Foreign Ministry (See his telegram to Myerson, No. 197, 25 July 1956, 130.09/2347/2).

355. E. Elath (London) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 28 July 1956

Coded Tel. 313; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports that Lloyd had relayed to him a personal request that Israel refrain from any action at this moment which could make it difficult for Britain, together with its allies, to consider how to react to Nasser's latest step. Therefore he asked Israel not to raise the issue of freedom of passage in the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Eilat in the Security Council, and not to express satisfaction publicly with the measures adopted against Nasser.

Elath promised to convey the request to his government, but took the opportunity to point out that the nationalisation of the Canal resulted from the conciliatory policy towards Nasser, which Israel had warned against.

Finally, Elath notes that the British press was printing some of the ideas leaked by the embassy, including that of laying an oil pipeline from Eilat to Haifa.[2]

Notes

1. In his speech on the occasion of Revolution Day, Nasser said, among other things "We will fight against imperialism and against Israel which was established by it and which aspires to conquer all the area from the Nile to the Euphrates" (See *Ha'aretz*, 27 July 1956).
2. Among the ideas raised by Elath were that Britain should decide immediately to send Centurion tanks to Israel and to examine the possibility of laying an oil pipeline from Eilat to Haifa (See Elath to the Foreign Ministry. Tel. 312, 27 July 1956, 130.02/2409/5).
3. The Foreign Ministry instructed Elath to send the following reply: "The government of Israel is not interested in increasing the difficulties of the discussions and actions of the Powers. The government of Israel is certain that during these discussions appropriate attention will be given to the Egyptian denial of freedom of navigation to Israel both via Suez and the Straits of Tiran, which has continued for years. ... with all its desire not to increase the difficulties of the Powers Israel ... cannot tolerate the ignoring of its fundamental rights. Before the government of Israel finally decides how to act, and in what form to convey its interests to the in international community it wishes to know how the powers are considering assurance of its rights" (See British Commonwealth Division to the Israel embassy in London. Tel. 985, 30 July 1956, 130.02/2409/5).

356. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 29 July 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 911; Outg.: 130.02/2450/2

Summary

Eytan sends a briefing to the missions abroad following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.[1] The Israeli representatives must refrain from making public statements on this matter in order not to weaken the head-on collision between the Powers and Egypt by magnifying the Israel factor. In private conversations with statesmen and in efforts to influence the press they must stress the urgent need to strengthen Israel militarily, the possibility of laying an oil pipeline from Eilat to Haifa[3] or exploring the possibility of digging a parallel canal[4] and the necessity of waging vigorous economic war against Egypt in order to undermine the foundations of Nasser's regime.[5]

Notes

1. The briefing was sent following consultations that took place on the same day at the Foreign Ministry with the participation of the director-general and other heads of the ministry (See File 130.02/2409/5, Summary, 30 July 1956).
2. Nasser had promised to remove Syria's opposition to the Johnston water plan but did not keep his promise (See No. 46).
3. The proposal to lay an oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean Sea was raised in 1949 in consultations held in London by David Horowitz, who was then director-general of the Ministry of Finance. Representatives of the oil firms which participated in these talks argued that the plan was not possible as the Arab states would not allow passage of oil to Israel (See Kosloff to Sharett, 28 June 1949, 93.00/418/6).
4. This idea was discussed a number of times at the Foreign Ministry (See Salkind to Lourie, 17 March 1954, 130.13/2588/4, and review of 13 August 1956, 93.00/418/6).
5. Additional to the previous telegram, Israeli representatives in Stockholm, Oslo, the Hague, Ottawa, Pretoria and Sydney were instructed to contact their respective Foreign Ministries and convey the following message:
"Israel, as a state that borders on Egypt and as such is vitally interested in freedom of passage in the Canal, has followed with alarm developments in Egypt and the discussions of the three Powers on these matters. The Israeli government wishes to draw to the attention of your government that for years the Egyptian government has violated freedom of passage both via Suez and the Straits of Tiran. The Security Council, in its decision of September 1951, ruled against continuation of disturbance of freedom of navigation … The government of Israel is confident that your government will stand guard on the principle of freedom of navigation and, in contacts and consultations with the three Powers, will take care that this principle be applied in practice to all states without exception, in accordance with the Convention of Constantinople and with the resolution of the Security Council in 1951." The

representatives were instructed to keep this approach secret (See telegram of 30 July, 130.02/2450/2).

357. D. Ben-Gurion to D. Hammarskjöld (New York). 29 July 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/4

Notes

1. In File 130.02/2448/5. In his letter Hammarskjöld thanked Ben-Gurion for hospitality received during his visit to Israel and added some philosophical reflections.
2. No. 348.
3. In this conversation they discussed the incidents on the Jordan border and the messages sent by Hammarskjöld to Israel and Jordan as a result (See Tekoah to the Israel missions abroad, Tel. 461, 27 July 1956, 130.02/2448/5).
4. For Hammarskjöld's reply see Nos. 360 and 370.

358. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Washington. 29 July 1956

Coded Tel. 225; Outg.: 130/09/2311/9

Summary

At his urgent request, Lawson was received by the prime minister. He read out a briefing from the State Department[1] which expressed undiminished concern over the situation on the Jordanian border. The department called for Israeli restraint, and was very concerned about Israel's preoccupation with the reprisal issue.[2] It requested that Israel cooperate with the Armistice Commission. The prime minister replied that there were no grounds for the State Department's fear that Israel would do anything to disturb the peace.

Notes

1. See *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XV, No. 507.
2. Refers to an interview with Ben-Gurion which appeared in the 26 July issue of the *Herald Tribune*, in which he explained that if the U.N. did not halt Arab terror attacks on Israel, Israel would punish the perpetrators.

3. On 26 July the Jordanians opened fire on U.N. observers who were investigating incidents in the area of Mevasseret Jerusalem. The Jordanians claimed that villagers were responsible. Two observers were wounded, one of them seriously.
4. See No. 348.

359. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 29 July 1956

Coded Tel.; Outg.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur cables about a meeting with the Tunisian minister of finance and their ambassador in Paris. They asked for aid from Israel to organise their state fiscal system and also explored the possibility of sending some young people to Israel to study the subject. Tsur said that Israel was prepared to help. The minister replied that he would discuss this with Bourguiba when he returned to Tunisia. In the course of the conversation they were at pains to prove their desire to live peacefully with their Jewish citizens and not to prevent emigration. They also expressed strong opposition to Nasser and the Arab League and stressed Tunisia's uniqueness as representative of a separate culture and their opposition to Moslem expansionist aspirations.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 75.
2. The reply from the Foreign Ministry states that it is important for Tsur to inform his Tunisian colleague that his request was received in Israel favourably and with great satisfaction. Israel is ready to extend all the help required. The West European Division will be responsible for execution of this operation (See Najar to Tsur, 9 August 1956, 93.02/193/12). No further documentation on this matter was found.

360. D. Hammarskjöld [New York] to D. Ben-Gurion. 31 July 1956

Copy: 93.03/3042/3

Notes

1. No. 357.
2. See ibid., n.1.

3. No. 348.
4. See No. 350 and n.1 there.

361. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 31 July 1956

Coded Tel. 332; Inc.: 130.02/2457/1

Summary

Elath cables about a conversation with Caccia of the British Foreign Office regarding the nationalisation of the Canal. Elath informed him of the contents of the instructions received from Israel,[1] and asked to what extent Israel could be certain that they would not neglect its interests in their discussions. Caccia replied that Eden's statement in Parliament the previous day on the guaranteeing of freedom of navigation could dispel Israel's apprehensions. Elath could announce to his government that the abnormal situation preventing the right of passage to Israel through the Canal would be ended. Elath asked about freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran and was told that after the Canal issue was dealt with it would be easier to deal with that issue as well. Elath then proceeded to discuss arms supply, and said that it was vital to strengthen Israel. Caccia answered that he understood Israel's concerns but Britain must now adopt a cautious policy in order not to give Nasser the opportunity to unite the whole Arab world around him. Elath protested about this, and Caccia said that he would convey his remarks to the foreign minister.

Notes

1. See No. 355 and n. 3 there.
2. See No. 351 (Editorial Note).

362. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 31 July 1956

Coded Tel. 238; Inc.: 130.02/2450/2

Summary

Tsur describes a conversation with Joxe[1] who reported on the discussions in London.[2] France was demanding firm guarantees for free passage through the Canal and for the proper management of the Company. It had no faith in Nasser's promises and therefore was not prepared to be satisfied with words. The intention was to convene a conference of the states using the Canal which would establish an international company to replace the Canal Company. The Western states would be invited to the conference, but not the Arab states and Israel. Nasser would be called upon to recognise the new company and to hand over the running of the Canal to it. In the event of his refusing to do so measures would be taken against him. Tsur replied that Israel was not seeking to figure prominently in the current conflict, but it did demand free passage through the Canal and the Straits of Tiran. Joxe said that the three Powers believed that the Arab-Israeli issue must be kept separate from the Canal issue, and the question of Israel's rights would be raised when this was seen to be tactically useful. Tsur responded by saying that after Nasser had nationalised the Canal there remained no dramatic step for him to take apart from war against Israel, and therefore the danger of war had increased. Joxe replied that the Powers were taking this danger into account, but the United States' position was hesitant, just as it was hesitant about the steps to be taken with regard to the Canal.

Notes

1. Louis Joxe had replaced René Massigli as director-general of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. See No. 362 (Editorial Note).
3. Robert Murphy, the under-secretary of state, was the senior United States representative in the first days of the discussions in London. On 31 July Dulles joined him and replaced him as head of the American delegation.

363. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Meir. 1 August 1956

Coded Tel. WIA519; Outg.: 93.01/2213/2

Summary

Eban suggests presenting a letter to all the maritime powers. In the letter it would be stated that Israel has heard about the intention to convene a conference to discuss international supervision of the Suez Canal. Israel demands that the conference also ensure freedom of navigation for Israel in compliance with the Constantinople Convention and the appropriate Security Council resolution. He suggests that the text of the letter not be published now but only the fact of its existence, in order to ensure public awareness in all the states. He requests approval for his suggestion.[2]

Notes

1. The remarks were made in a conversation on 30 July 1956. Allen added that the consultations in London were aimed at an arrangement guaranteeing freedom of navigation for Israel (See Eban's telegram WIA509, 30 July 1956, 93.01/2213/1).
2. Eytan cabled Eban (Tel. 251, 2 August 1956, 130.09/2311/9) that his suggestion had been accepted and he was being asked to prepare a draft. Text of the letter see No. 381.

364. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 2 August 1956

Coded Tel. 348; Inc.: 130/09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with the French ambassador in London who informed him about the Three Power discussions. It turned out that there was no room for action on the juridical plane in the wake of the nationalisation of the Canal. The problem confronting the powers was political. The success of any action necessitated absolute unity among the three, but at present this only existed between Britain and France, whereas the United States was hesitant. They were waiting for Dulles to come, but he feared that even if a common language were found after his arrival, great damage would be caused by the exposure of the schism in the West.

With regard to Israel he said that the problem had been mentioned in discussion and there was full understanding of its needs, but the participants saw a need to keep the problem of Israel separate from the Canal question in order not to create the impression that the consultation had been convened in order to protect Israel's interests. He added that Israel should not draw any negative conclusions from this since as far as his government was concerned Israel need not have any qualms regarding France's friendship. He believed that Britain also could not resist the sympathy of public opinion for Israel in Britain for long.

Notes

1. This apparently refers to Nasser's speech in Alexandria on 1 August in which he said among other things that Egypt would defend the Canal and promised freedom of navigation in it (See *Ha'aretz*, 2 August 1956).
2. In a speech in the House of Commons on 27 July, Eden said that his government would act "with firmness and care" in the situation arising from Egypt's unilateral and arbitrary action.
3. In a conversation with journalists on 30 July Mollet described Nasser as "an apprentice dictator" and inquired whether his book, *The Philosophy of the Revolution* should not more appropriately be called *Mein Kampf*. He further said that his government had decided to respond with "an energetic and severe counter-stroke" to the nationalisation of the Canal, and it was only fitting that this response should be carried out in coordination with the Western allies.
4. In a speech in the Chamber of Deputies on 27 July Pineau said among other things that France would not be reconciled with Egypt's unilateral step, and that it was holding consultations with the United States and Britain.

365. M. Bartur (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassadors in Washington, Paris and London. 2 August 1956

Orig.: 93.08/421/11

Summary

Bartur sends the ambassadors a memorandum[1] and a plan for the laying of an oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean.[2] If the pipeline were laid it would be possible to transport between 20-30 million tons of oil through it annually, and thus reduce dependence on the Suez Canal. Of course there remained the problem of passage through the Gulf of Eilat but this was less serious than the Canal problem and Israel was interested in solving it. Presumably the argument will be raised that the Arab states will oppose the flow of oil through an Israeli pipeline, but on the other hand a situation can

be described where the pipeline would be used to transport Iranian oil or oil from Kuwait or Qatar, where Western influence was considerable.

Possibly, the fact that the pipeline would be constructed by Israel and not by the Western oil companies would help since the oil companies would then not have to face a frontal Arab attack.

Clearly the importance of the pipeline – from the economic and political standpoint – for Israel needed no emphasis. There had been consultation with the ministers of finance and trade and industry and with the Fuel Authority,[3] and of course with the foreign minister. Without entertaining illusions concerning the chances of the proposal, a serious effort should be made to look into the matter and he asks the ambassadors to put out feelers about it.[4]

Notes

1. A memorandum drafted by Kosloff was appended to Comay's letter to the ambassadors of Israel in Washington and London on 13 March 1952 (in File 93.08/421/11). In Comay's letter it said that the memorandum was prepared after he and Kosloff had talked with American diplomats regarding an oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean.
2. The plan, dated November 1951 (in File 93.08/421/11) was drawn up by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company at Kosloff's request during his visit to the company offices on 25 October 1951.
3. The minutes of this meeting, dated 1 August 1956, in File 130.02/2452/6.
4. It would appear that the embassy in London put out feelers on the subject and a few days later Gazit wrote from London (10 August 1956, 130.02/2452/6) that he had not yet received any real reactions to the idea, either from the British Foreign Office or from the oil companies. In addition he mentioned some considerations which could adversely affect the realisation of the project. According to him, the obstacle standing in the way of the Iranian oil was not connected with the methods of transportation but with Arab pressure and political considerations. Only if they were convinced that the pipeline idea would increase the amount of oil they would sell would they be prepared to consider its transportation by pipeline.

366. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 3 August 1956

Coded Tel.359; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on the conclusion of the Three Power consultation and the decisions reached. The decisions were a compromise between the positions

of France and Britain on the one hand, and of the United States on the other. Dulles was opposed to any hint in the statement[1] about the possibility of the use of force. In London they believe that the United States will do all in its power to persuade Nasser to participate in the conference. There are some who fear that the Americans will go too far in their conciliation efforts, and instead of bringing Nasser closer to a resolution of the problem they will increase his extreme demands. However, the American effort in itself seems desirable to the British since, if the United States fails, it will draw closer to the British and French position that a settlement has to be imposed by force. As for the position of the Soviet Union, there are those who believe that it will boycott the conference, and there are others who believe that it will exploit the opportunity to intervene lawfully and directly in Middle East affairs. Either way, the coming days will be full of diplomatic activity and this requires Israel to be on its guard in all three capitals.

Notes

1. The main points of the statement: the three Western powers do not question Egypt's right to exert its rights as a sovereign state, and under appropriate conditions, to nationalise assets unconnected with international interests. However, the current action is more than a simple act of nationalisation. It involves an arbitrary and unilateral seizure by one state of an international body which has the responsibility for operating and administering the Suez Canal so that all the signatories to the Constantinople Convention and those who benefit from it will be able to use the international waterway, on which depend the economy, the trade and security of a large part of the world. The statement expresses regret over "the denial of basic human rights" by forcing the Suez Canal employees to continue working under threat of imprisonment. It further states that steps should be taken to plan for operating arrangements in an international framework with the aim of ensuring the continued use of the Canal in a manner commensurate with Egypt's legitimate interests. Consequently, the three Powers suggest convening a conference in London with the participation of 24 states to discuss the issue, beginning on 16 August. These states will be divided into three groups: 1. States signatory to the Constantinople Convention, or successors of such states (Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Italy, Spain, Holland, Turkey and Egypt). 2. States possessing a large fleet using the Canal (Denmark, West Germany, Greece, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Portugal and the United States). 3. States whose trade passes through the Canal (Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Iran and Indonesia). See statement regarding the Suez Canal, undated, 130.02/2409/6.

367. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 3 August 1956

Coded Tel. 365; Inc.: 130.09/2314/4

Summary

Elath reports on his conversation with Lloyd. Elath began by complaining that Israel had not been invited to the conference of Canal users. He used the arguments he had received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Israel's exclusion from the list was not appropriate to its geographical position and its political status, and it was the state whose rights had been violated more than any other vis-à-vis the Canal. Lloyd replied that Israel's rights of free navigation would be taken into account. Excluding Israel was designed to keep the current crisis out of the framework of the Arab-Israel conflict. The possibility of isolating Nasser and of getting rid of him once and for all had now been created. It was important that Israel should be careful in the coming weeks to avoid actions which might make it easy for Nasser to present the crisis in the light that suited him. Elath led the conversation to the issue of the supply of arms. Lloyd replied that if he suddenly decided to supply arms to Israel, Nasser would succeed in uniting all the Arab states around him. At the same time, the current situation in the region was liable any day to bring developments which would compel Britain to change its policy on this issue as well. In conclusion, he said that he was sure that Israel was likely to emerge from the current crisis with profit if it adopted a cautious and level-headed policy.

Notes

1. This telegram reported on Westlake's conversation in the British Commonwealth Division in which he explained the underlying motives for not inviting Israel to the Canal users conference. According to him the Three Powers wished to limit the number of participants. Nevertheless, Israel's rights would be assured and its government would maintain close contact with the embassy during the conference. Elath was instructed to demand that Israel be invited on the grounds contained in the above telegram (See the British Commonwealth Division to Elath, 3 August 1956, 130.02/2450/2).

368. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division. 3 August 1956

Coded Tel. XA472; Outg.: 93.01/2213/2

Summary

Eban reports that he met with Russell who asked him to convey an interim report on the United States position regarding Suez. The three Western powers were united in the aim of imposing an active regime of international supervision on the Canal which would guarantee freedom of passage for all states. The purpose of the conference due to convene in London was to set up such a regime. If Egypt opposed it, additional steps would be taken which had already been agreed upon. The United States believed that the use of force had to be the last measure and not the first. The State Department believed that Israel would understand that its chances of enjoying freedom of navigation depended on the realisation of the international regime. Therefore it was in Israel's interest to exercise restraint and not to accentuate the Israeli factor. When Eban told him that Israel intended to present a letter[1] he expressed approval of this step.

Notes

1. See No. 380.

369. United States Division and the West European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassies in Washington and Paris. 3 August 1956

Coded Tel. 345 (Paris); Outg.: 130.09/2311/9

Summary

The divisions inform the ambassador that it had been decided to demand in Washington, Paris and London Israel's participation in the discussions of the London conference of Canal users. The grounds given should be Israel's geographic proximity, the volume of cargo, the Arab blockade of Israel's borders which caused losses, and the need for a connection between Eilat and Israel's northern ports. Non-invitation of Israel would be an ill omen

with regard to preserving Israel's rights in a settlement, if and when it was achieved.

Notes

1. See No. 367.

370. M. Kidron (New York) to W. Eytan. 3 August 1956

Orig.: 130.02/2410/1

Summary

Kidron sends the reply of the secretary-general to the prime minister's message of July 29.[1] He seeks to clarify the obscurities with regard to two passages in the secretary's reply (for the original passages see Main Volume, p. 610). The clarification is based on a "personal and confidential" conversation he held with the secretary after delivering the prime minister's message.

According to the secretary, in the first week of July Egypt had officially approached Britain and the United States with a proposal whose aim was to settle the conflict between Israel and the Arab world. The proposal had two stages. In the first stage there would be an exploration of the possibilities of a settlement, and in the second the gaps between the parties would be bridged. The bridging would be done by a group of states which would act as an arbitrating body. This group would be composed of the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union, India, Pakistan and another country, probably a South American country. In a conversation he held with Fawzi, Fawzi told him that the proposal was serious and reasonable and reflected the view of the Egyptian government. When Fawzi was asked who would do the exploration in the first stage, he replied that no one was more qualified for this than the secretary.

Kidron replied briefly that he doubted the sincerity of the Egyptian approach, which seemed to him to be only a stratagem. Kidron asked why he had not mentioned the proposal to the prime minister in their talks and asked for details of the proposal in writing. Hammarskjöld replied that he had been afraid of a leak. He agreed to put the details in writing without date or signature. In the meeting on 31 July he retracted and said that the proposal required further examination and the situation at the Canal did

not permit him to provide details. He agreed to put in only the two obscure passages mentioned above.

Notes

1. The prime minister's message – No. 357; Hammarskjöld's reply – No. 360.
2. See No. 345, and n. 1.
3. The speech was delivered on 26 July, see No. 351 (Editorial Note).
4. Eytan responded to this letter: "It is very hard to understand the secretary-general's letter, even after reading your Rashi [a Biblical commentator] commentary. Is the secretary-general complicating matters and his thinking intentionally, or was he perhaps created and gifted thus by the Almighty?" (Eytan to Kidron, 3 August 1956, 93.03/3042/3).

371. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 4 August 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 940; Outg.: 130.09/2377/4

Summary

The director-general instructs all the missions to make a vigorous information effort prior to the convening of the conference of Canal-using states. Prominence must be given to the demand that any settlement involving freedom of navigation must unreservedly guarantee the rights of Israel.

372. J. Tsur (Paris) to the West European Division. 6 August 1956

Coded Tel. 285; Inc.: 130.02/2450/2

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau in which the latter reported on the Three Power discussions in London and their intentions regarding the future of the Suez Canal. Tsur points out that Pineau was uncharacteristically reserved during the conversation, refrained from answering questions clearly and the information which he gave was in response to questions put by Tsur, some of them repeated several times.

Tsur began by bringing up Israel's demand for participation in the London conference on the Suez Canal. Pineau did not respond, but noted that they had compiled the list with great effort and any change was liable to be detrimental to the whole matter. Essentially, he noted that France and Britain were determined to hold the conference and to take military measures against Egypt if it did not accept its decisions. There was complete coordination with Britain. The position of the United States was unclear, but the reservations of the Americans, who were against any military measures, meant that they would not take part. This nullified the possibility that there would be a world conflagration and it was to be hoped that the conflict would be localised. Tsur mentioned the remarks made in the British parliament regarding the possibility of laying an oil pipeline between Eilat and the Mediterranean.[4] Pineau replied that France was extremely interested in this even if the Canal issue was settled. As to the passage of Israeli shipping in the Canal, he said that there was no doubt that any new settlement would take into account the Israeli demand and added that it had been a grave mistake that in the past they had not vigorously insisted on this. Regarding the defence of Israel and its arming he said that the Three Powers see the issue as crucial but do not wish to take any overt action on this until the conference.

Notes

1. See No. 369.
2. In the margin of the telegram the minister of foreign affairs wrote: "Why is he asking this?"
3. Refers to the meeting of Nasser, Nehru and Tito in Brioni in Yugoslavia in July 1956, see No. 346.
4. This apparently refers to remarks made in the House of Lords by Hore-Belisha, who suggested an alternative canal from Aqaba to the Mediterranean and laying a pipeline across Israel's territory.
5. In a conversation which Tsur held with Joxe on 7 August, the latter announced that Israel's request to participate in the conference had been turned down because the "the list has been closed." He replied affirmatively to Tsur's request that he take note that if there should be any change in the list, Israel's demand still stood. Joxe reiterated vigorously that France would demand freedom of passage through the Canal for Israeli shipping. He said that this was the goal of their struggle and they would not retreat on this point (See Tsur's telegram to the West European Division, No. 299, 8 August 1956, 130.09/2347/2).

373. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 7 August 1956

Coded Tel. 444; 130.02/2450/2

Summary

Avidar reports on his conversation with Semyonov following instructions from Israel to discuss Khrushchev's declaration about the Suez Canal and an article in *Izvestya* about the alleged concentrations of Israeli forces.[2] Semyonov explained that in his opinion Khrushchev's statement was general and did not go into the specific aspects of the question. As for the article, it expressed the fear of the Soviet public that Israel would be exploited by certain Powers to realise their aims in the Middle East. In response, Avidar repeated Israel's commitment to peace with its neighbours, recalled the U.N. denial of troop concentrations on the border[3] and hinted that rather than the newspaper expressing the public mood, it was creating such a mood. Semyonov replied in a slightly apologetic tone that he would look into the matter and bring Avidar's comments to the editor's notice.

Notes

1. In this telegram Avidar was instructed to meet with a senior official in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, preferably with Shepilov, to point out that Israel was not intervening in the matter of the nationalisation of the Canal and to request clarification of a passage in Khrushchev's statement of 31 July that the Soviet Union regards freedom of navigation in the Canal for all as a must. Avidar should request that the Soviet Union confirm that this position also included freedom of navigation for Israel, and that it would make this position clear both in international consultations as well as in contacts with Egypt (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Moscow, Tel.265, 2 August 1956, 130.09/2326/6).
   Khrushchev made these remarks in a speech marking "Construction Workers' Day" and most of them were in defence of Egypt's actions and a call to resolve the crisis peacefully.
2. On 29 July an article appeared in *Izvestya* attacking the "warmongering circles in Israel" because of their threat against the Arab states, particularly Jordan, and mentioning the names of Ben-Gurion and Yigal Allon. Israel was warned against taking ill-considered steps for the results of which it would be solely responsible (See the telegrams of the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nos. 428, 429, 29 July 1956, 130.09/2326/7).
3. The statement issued by the U.N. Headquarters on 10 July said that the commander of the U.N. Observer Force had received assurances from the governments concerned (Jordan and Israel) that there were no troop concentrations in the region over and above what was permitted in the Armistice Agreement. With regard to the Israeli side, this was verified by visits of the U.N. military observers (See the East European

Division to the embassy in Moscow, Tel. 266, 2 August 1956, 130.09/2326/6). The article in *Izvestya* was published on 29 July, that is to say, over two weeks after the U.N. clarification.

374. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 8 August 1956

Coded Tel. 381; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath refers to the statement of the British Foreign office spokesman who explained that Britain's refusal to raise the Canal issue in the U.N. was due to the fact that Egypt had violated the Security Council resolution on freedom of passage through the Canal. Elath points out that Britain had raised this matter not from concern about Israel, but in an attempt to ease the minds of several states and part of the Labour Party who had demanded that the Canal issue be transferred to the U.N. Nevertheless the statement had political significance and reinforced assurances which had recently been given.[1] Elath adds that in order to facilitate the participation of India in the conference, the Three Powers had decided and announced that participation did not require prior acceptance of the principle of internationalisation. It remained to be seen to what extent this concession had succeeded in influencing the Soviet Union[2] and Egypt[3] as well.

Notes

1. See Nos. 361, 367.
2. In the end the Soviet Union did participate in the conference – See No. 376.
3. On 12 August Nasser announced rejection of the invitation to the conference at a press conference in Cairo. He took issue with the statement of the Three Powers at the conclusion of the London talks (See No. 366) and closed his remarks as follows: Since Egypt believes it is essential to do everything in its power to ensure world peace, and since it is firmly committed to the U.N. charter and the Bandung Conference which say that international disputes must be resolved peacefully, it is prepared to convene a conference comprising the states signatory to the 1888 Convention and the other states whose ships pass through the Canal to discuss the signing of an agreement between all these states, and it will guarantee freedom of navigation through the Canal. The agreement will be registered in the U.N. Secretariat and will be distributed by it. The door will remain open to the admission of other states depending upon the situation (according to a translation made in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in File 130.02/2409/6). The text of the remarks was forwarded in a letter to the British ambassador in Cairo (ibid.). In the end Egypt did not participate

in the conference, but the director of Nasser's political bureau, 'Ali Sabri, attended in an observer capacity.

375. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Meir. 9 August 1956

Coded Tel. WIA550; 93.01/2213/2

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Dulles.

Eban began with the Canal crisis and noted that since the start of the crisis Israel had refrained from any public initiative whatsoever, despite its being the only state which had so far suffered a systematic violation of the Constantinople Convention. It was important that a solution be found which would ensure freedom of passage through the Canal. Israel had the full right to participate in the conference of Canal users in London and still hoped to be included, and if not – that its interests be preserved through a solemn commitment by all the conference participants. He added that beside the Suez problem, there was a further trend and that was Nasser's expansionist aspirations. An Egyptian victory now would give Nasser a great impetus for further conquests. Whether a solution was found for the Canal problem or not, it was important for the West to reduce its dependence on the Canal. Eban pointed out various projects, stressing in particular the idea of a pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean. He added that recent events made it essential to accelerate the arming of Israel and yet precisely because of these events there was now a deadlock. He hoped that the mooted project with Canada would be speedily implemented and suggested that the United States should supply without delay the items to which it had committed itself.[2]

Dulles in his reply gave explanations regarding the composition of the London conference. He said that Israel's decision to request a commitment from the conference participants was constructive and advised Israel to do so in writing. He repeated United States support for freedom of navigation but said again that for the sake of clarifying the matter it was desirable for these things to be conveyed in writing (Eban replied that Israel would submit a letter within a few days).[6] He agreed enthusiastically with the idea of alternatives to the Suez Canal. Western dependence on Arab oil was unhealthy, but at the same the Arab states were dependent on the Western dollars which they received for the oil. Actually, they had already begun to explore alternatives (here they went deeper into the discussion with the aid of maps). On the issue of arms, he said that the United States did not want

the Canadian deal to be presented in any way as being a reward for Israel after the nationalisation of the Canal, thus making a connection between the Canal conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Canada's position with regard to publicising the deal was inflexible.[9] He promised to study the suggestion that the United States should supply immediately the items which it had committed itself to. He said that the Export-Import Bank was close to completing examination of the loan to Israel and suggested that Eban talk with Hoover.[10]

Notes

1. The text of the Security Council resolution of 1 November 1951 on freedom of navigation through the Canal, see in Vol. 6, Editorial Note on pp. 593-594. Other statements and initiatives of the United States for freedom of navigation are contained in No. 386.
2. See No. 353.
3. In a conversation held later in Canada, at the level of the director-general of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel's ambassador, Comay, did not manage to persuade the Canadians to accelerate the supply of the planes. Israel was told that the delivery process had been determined by the government, only the government was authorised to change it and no cabinet meeting was scheduled until the beginning of September (See Comay to the British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 269, 21 August 1956, 130.02/2456/9).
4. See No. 404 and n. 4 there.
5. In a televised speech on 3 August Dulles said among other things that the response to the nationalisation of the Canal had to be by moral means and not by military ones. He expressed the hope that the London Conference would succeed in brokering an agreement acceptable both to Egypt and Britain and France. He stressed that the United States had not committed itself with regard to any action that might have to be taken should the conference end in failure. He accused Nasser of aspiring to impose his influence from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf, but noted that he had done much for Egypt, and that any plan for international inspection of the Canal had to safeguard Egypt's legitimate rights (See *Ha'aretz*, 5 August 1956).
6. See No. 381.
7. In a speech on TV on 8 August 1956 Eden said, among other things, that the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was a matter of life and death for Britain (*Ha'aretz*, 9 August 1956).
8. See No. 365.
9. See No. 353 and n. 2 there.
10. Eban's meeting with Hoover did not take place due to the latter's illness. The subject was raised again at Eban's meeting with Dulles on 11 September – See No. 415.

376. Israel Embassy in Moscow to A. Eshel and the East European Division. 9 August 1956

Coded Tel. 450; Inc.: 130.02/2450/2

Summary

The embassy conveys the main points of the Soviet statement regarding the conference of Canal users.[1] In the statement it said that the Soviet Union had two reservations – the first about the subject of the conference and the second about its composition. Regarding the subject, it stated that in fact the principle of freedom of passage through the Canal had not been violated and had been fully maintained. Regarding the composition, many states, including the successors of states signatory to the 1888 treaty had not been included, as well as most of the Arab states who had a direct interest in the discussions.[2] In this regard particular stress was laid on the absence of the People's Republic of China.

Notes

1. The statement in full, in its Russian original, in File 130.02/2409/6.
2. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' response, see No. 394

377. Memorandum on Immigration from Morocco.[1] 9 August 1956

Copy: 93.04/335/10

Summary

The ministry sends a briefing to its missions and divisions concerning the situation of immigration from Morocco.[2] The Moroccan government has decided to permit the exit of the inhabitants of the immigrant camp (5,600 persons). It has not decided on the fate of the 70,000 other Jews who had registered for immigration, of whom 50,000 had already undergone selection. There was a danger that the government of Morocco would agree in principle to their emigration, but would in fact thwart it. The missions were requested to work discreetly in public and media circles to explain the situation so that the background should be clear to them and so that when the time came, if necessary, it would be possible to activate them. They

must also explain the facts to the local Jewish communities, and it was important to preserve a united Jewish front on this issue. All of this must be done without publicity, because the government of Morocco had made the decision conditional on avoiding publicity.

Notes

1. Sent to various departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Israeli missions overseas.
2. On earlier developments on this subject see No. 354 and also the memorandum apparently drafted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 July 1956, 93.03/150/14.

378. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to M. Kidron (New York). 10 August 1956

Coded Tel. TNW474; 130.02/2434/8

Summary

Tekoah refers to Kidron's telegram[1] regarding the fortifications[2] in the demilitarized zone in the north. He reports that work on the fortifications was resumed on 1 August and would be completed within a few days. He expresses astonishment at the position of the secretary-general who ignores the fact that the protection of the inhabitants in the demilitarized zone was guaranteed in Bunche's letter in 1949[3] and that in the latest Syrian letter to the Security Council[4] they link the fortifications together with other complaints such as the establishment of settlements, something which was approved by the U.N. long ago. The U.N. was unable to justify declaring the fortifications inadmissable on any grounds whatsoever, military or juridical. Israel's policy with regard to the armistice agreements is to observe them to the full and to oppose keeping any condition in them which is convenient for the other side, when that side violates the basic terms of the agreement.

Notes

1. In this telegram (dated 8 August 1956, in File 130.09/2333/1) Kidron reported to Tekoah that he had been informed that Hammarskjöld in a conversation with his aides had expressed concern lest the fortification work in the demilitarized zone might lead to a military reaction by Syria. Kidron asked if any change had taken place in recent days in the demilitarized zones on the Syrian border.
2. See No. 312 and n. 8 there, No. 325.

3. See Vol. 3, No. 343. The subject of this document is civilian life in the demilitarized zones.
4. The Syrian letter was submitted on 7 August. It accused Israel of aggressive actions in the demilitarized zone, manifested among other things by the stationing of military forces in police uniforms, the establishment of settlements and the building of fortifications (See *Ha'aretz*, 9 August).
5. This is the basic clause in the armistice agreements which asserts that "none of the sides shall initiate, plan or carry out an aggressive act.... against the population or the armed forces of the other side."

379. A. Eban to J. F. Dulles (Washington). 10 August 1956

Copy: 93.08/391/2

Notes

1. See No. 375.
2. See No. 165.

380. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 12 August 1956

Coded Tel. 476; Outg.: 130.02/2409/6

Summary

Eytan reports that in contrast to the impression which Egyptian propaganda wishes to create, there has been no easing recently of the blockade imposed on Israeli shipping in the Canal. They do not permit the passage of Israeli ships or of "strategic materials" including oil and chemicals. In other cases they do allow the passage of the ship but carry out searches and sometimes hold it up for a number of days. Latterly, there has also been an intensification of the blockade, that is, prohibiting the passage of all ships bound for Eilat through the Suez Canal.[1]

Notes

1. See No. 281, n.1

381. Note from the Israel Ambassador in Washington to the U.S. Secretary of State. 13 August 1956

Copy: 130.02/2409/5

Notes

1. See No. 281, n. 3.
2. In this Article it states that the two governments recognise that the Suez Canal, which constitutes an integral part of Egypt, is a waterway of international importance from the economic, trade and strategic aspects, and they are determined to uphold the Constantinople Convention which guarantees freedom of shipping through the Canal.
3. See No. 375.
4. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was decided that this Note should be presented, with the appropriate changes, in London and Paris as well. It was also decided that because of the lack of time the ambassador in London would hand similar Notes to the delegations to the Conference of Canal Users states, directly, or through their ambassadors in London, this in addition to delivering the Notes in each of the capitals (Copies of the Notes in File 93.04/47/4). These Notes were not presented to Pakistan and Indonesia, states which did not have ties with Israel. In the Note presented to the Soviet Union, paragraph 10 was worded as follows:
   "The Government of Israel is aware that the Government of the U.S.S.R. upholds the right of free passage through the Suez Canal for the ships of all nations wherever bound, and assumes that under any new arrangements made for the operation of the Suez Canal, the U.S.S.R. will insist on ensuring free passage for Israel shipping as for the shipping of other nations. It would welcome a formal assurance that this assumption is correct."

382. D. Hammarskjöld [New York] to D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem). 13 August 1956

Copy: 93.08/410/5

Notes

1. See No. 344.
2. Burns' letters on these issues in File 130.02/2440/9. In the end, these issues were discussed in a conversation between Ben-Gurion and Burns on 3 September – See No. 411.
3. See No. 383.
   In response to this letter from Hammarskjöld, Tekoah asked (telegram to Kidron, TNW 478, 15 August 1956, 130.02/2432/8) whether he knew if Hammarskjöld had

sent similar letters to the Arab states on such issues as the exchange of prisoners with Egypt, the *Panagia* ship and Article VIII in the Armistice Agreement with Jordan. He added that he knew from a confidential source that Burns had drawn the Egyptians' attention to the large number of incidents on the border with Israel, and had demanded the adoption of "urgent measures" to correct the situation. He also added that Hammarskjöld had asked Burns to balance his appeal to the Egyptians by making an appeal to Israel.

This affair had its continuation in a tense conversation between Kidron and Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjöld explained that there was a difference between the five points he had raised in his letter to Ben-Gurion, which all stemmed form the report he had submitted to the Security Council in May, and which were new problems, mainly between Israel and the U.N. or which the U.N. was a party to, and the problems raised by Ben-Gurion, which had been pending for a long time and which mainly involved the dispute between the parties themselves. Kidron took issue with this and insisted particularly on the foot-dragging with regard to Article VIII. Israel did not understand why the U.N. did not convene the special commission to resolve the issue. Later in the conversation they discussed two serious border incidents in the south, in which four Israelis had been killed and seven or eight wounded. Hammarskjöld promised to issue a sharp statement of condemnation when the facts were known, and in fact such a statement was issued (See Kidron to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. X514, 16 August 1956, 130.02/2448/4; Hammarskjöld's statement of 16 August 1956, in File 130.02/2404/4, an additional statement issued on 17 August after an Israeli retaliatory raid – in File 93.03/3042/3).

383. D. Hammarskjöld (New York) to M. Kidron (New York). 13 August 1956

Copy: 93.03/3042/3

Notes

1. See No. 370.
2. This report deals with incidents on the Israel-Jordan border in July 1956. The major part of it comprises a factual report on the incidents as described by Burns. (See Kidron's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 475, 3 August 1956, 130.09/2333/1).
3. See No. 344.
4. See No. 179 (Editorial Note) and No. 277 (Editorial Note).
5. Should be 9 May. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
6. See No. 312.

384. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 15 August 1956

Coded Tel. 424: Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Malik, on the occasion of the handing over of Israel's Note concerning the Suez issue.[1] Elath mentioned Israel's not being invited to the London conference and the fact that Russia had not demanded that Israel be invited either,[2] but Malik did not reply. On the other hand Malik noted that Russia would be consistent in its support of the principle of freedom of navigation and that Israel had no grounds to doubt this. He also said that if the West wished to reach a peace settlement with Nasser, this would help to make it easier to resolve many problems including that of Israel's freedom of navigation through the canal. Elath said that he welcomed his remarks. However Israel was not content with establishing principles but wanted the conference to explicitly guarantee Israel's rights of passage. Malik did not respond to these remarks. Elath felt that Malik had not weighed his remarks at the start of the conversation sufficiently. When he felt that Elath was trying to commit the Soviet government regarding what he had said, he retreated. At the end of the conversation Elath asked to meet with Shepilov regarding Suez, and Malik promised to inform Shepilov of his request.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 381, n. 4.
2. See No. 376.
3. In this speech the British foreign minister said among other things that his country would work with all its power for a peaceful solution to the Suez Canal dispute, but that solution must include some form of international control for this essential waterway. The British Government and the British people were not bellicose, and force was and always has been the last resort for Britain (See *Ha'aretz*, 15 August 1956).
4. Shepilov evaded meeting with Elath. The Israeli Note was also delivered in Moscow to one of his aides, Zakharov, who promised to deliver it to the minister of foreign affairs (See Chelouche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 480, 24 August 1956, 130.09/2326/8).

385. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 15 August 1956

Coded Tel. 426; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Mrs. Pandit, the Indian high commissioner in Britain, on the occasion of the delivery of the Israeli Note regarding Suez.[1] Mrs. Pandit said that her brother Nehru had been surprised by Nasser's step. In the talks in Brioni[2] the matter was not mentioned and in the past, regarding the Aswan Dam, Nehru had tried to persuade Nasser that Egypt should concentrate in the near future on implementing cheaper and more urgent projects. According to her, her brother warned Nasser of the danger of his step and because of his pressure Nasser was acting with greater moderation and was ready for concessions. The pressure of the Egyptian people and army would make it difficult for Nasser to back down immediately, but if the West wanted a peaceful solution to the problem, this could be achieved. According to Mrs. Pandit, Nehru was concerned about the stand of Eden who had made only a formal response to the three letters which India had sent, in which he had been advised not to take military measures.

Notes

1. See No. 381, n. 4.
2. See No. 346.

386. A. Eban (Washington) to J.F. Dulles (Washington). 16 August 1956

Copy: 130.02/2452/3

Notes

1. No. 381.
2. The State Department acknowledged receipt of the Note of 13 August and the above letter and stated that the contents of these documents were being studied in detail in the Department. (See the acting secretary of state to the Israel ambassador in Washington, 23 August 1956, 130.02/2409/7).

387. Editorial Note

The London Conference on the Suez Canal

The conference of Canal-using states opened in London on 16 August. Two of the states invited, Egypt and Greece, did not attend. Nasser explained Egypt's absence in a long speech which was broadcast on 12 August. He repeated Egypt's claim to absolute sovereignty over the Canal and described the actions of the three Western powers as an attempt to starve and terrorise Egypt. The U.S.S.R. attended the conference, but raised objections to its composition and powers in a Note circulated among the participants (see No. 376). The U.S.S.R. stated that it would not be bound by any decision which would limit Egypt's right to nationalise the Canal.

Dulles made the opening speech of the conference. He declared that a fair plan must be drawn up which would recognise the legitimate interests of all, based on the following principles: 1) the Canal should be operated efficiently as a free and safe waterway according to the principles of the 1888 Convention; 2) the operation of the Canal should not be affected by any national policy; 3) there should be recognition of the legitimate rights of Egypt in the Canal and its operation, and Egypt should be ensured an equitable share of the income; 4) steps should be taken to pay the Canal company fair compensation. In order to carry out this plan the following settlement would be made: the Canal would be operated by an international board set up by contractual agreement and which would be linked to the U.N. Egypt would be a member of this committee, but no state would control it. Egypt would be assured of her share of the income from the operation of the Canal taking into account her sovereignty and legitimate rights. The settlement would ensure payment and fair compensation to the Suez Canal Company. Any disagreements as to the latter clauses would be settled by an arbitration commission to be set up by the International Court of Justice.

Dulles' proposals received the assent of most of the participating states. Krishna Menon, the Indian representative, on the other hand, insisted on Egypt's sovereign right to nationalise and operate the Canal, and agreed only to the setting up of an advisory and liason body to be associated with the Canal management. The Indian proposal was supported by the U.S.S.R., Indonesia and Ceylon. The talks ended on 23 August with the decision to set up a Committee of Five States, headed by the Australian representative Robert Menzies, which was to open negotiations with Egypt on the majority proposal.

388. E. Najar (London) to W. Eytan. 17 August 1956

Coded Tel. 446; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Najar reports on a conversation with Roux following the opening of the London conference on Suez. Dulles' opening address[1] had given great satisfaction to the British and the Americans, since he indicated unity, which had been lacking at the start of the affair.[2] The Suez crisis was essentially political and not legal and it gave the West a golden opportunity to curb Nasser. The goal of the three Powers is not only to resolve the Suez issue, but also to resolve the question of Nasser. Initially they hope to establish principles, and afterwards it will be necessary for contact with Egypt and technical preparations. Roux believes that the settlement of the Canal issue will not include discrimination against Israel. It is not clear to the French if there was coordination between the Russians and Nasser over the nationalisation of the Canal.

Their impression was that the Russians had talked frankly with Nasser and would not let him drag them into a frontal conflagration with the West. Najar mentioned the matter of the pipeline[3] and pointed out that if the French were really interested in the project they would have to hurry because both governments and oil companies had approached Israel.[4]

Notes

1. See Editorial Note above
2. See No. 362 and n. 2 there.
3. See No. 356, n. 3.
4. On the talks in London with the representatives of the oil companies see the embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 389, 9 July 1956, 130.09/2321/4. On the talks in Washington, see No. 407 and n. 2 there.

389. E. Elath (London) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 17 August 1956

Coded Tel. 448; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports that he was called to Kirkpatrick who informed him that a number of items of weaponry had been approved for Israel (for the full list, see the Main Volume, p. 641).[1] However he added that in the next two months it would not be possible to supply Centurion tanks to any purchaser, including Israel, but Israel would be able to renew its request at the end of those two months. If the situation worsened, Israel's request would be discussed before then, and if the decision was favourable they would have to take out the tanks from their units.

Elath replied that his government welcomed the decision, but regretted that it was not possible to supply the tanks, which placed the Israeli armour in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the Egyptian army. Kirkpatrick replied that he would convey Elath's remarks to the foreign minister.[3]

Notes

1. Compare this list with the list which Elath submitted in April – No. 210.
2. See No. 387 (Editorial Note).
3. In another telegram (Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 452, dated 18 August 1956, 130.09/23321/4), Elath noted that in his opinion it was too early to draw far-reaching conclusions from Kirkpatrick's remarks. Although there had been a positive shift, apparently with the aim of improving the atmosphere and laying the groundwork should the situation at the Canal worsen and they would require "something" from Israel, he had left the issue of the Centurions apparently as a key card to play if they should wish to obtain from Israel a price which they regarded as justified. As long as Nuri al-Sa'id remained in power in Iraq, and it did not join the Nasser camp, Israel's chances of receiving aid from Britain – political and military – were extremely low. If Israel became embroiled in serious retaliatory operations which would cause it to be condemned by the U.N. institutions, Israel's chances of getting Britain to view its positions favourably and increase its military aid would be impaired.

390. D. Hammarskjöld (New York) to D. Ben-Gurion. 18 August 1956

Copy: 93.08/410/5

Notes

1. See No. 382, n. 4.
2. See No. 344.
3. See No. 382.
4. French: "Nonetheless, for all that."
5. Ben-Gurion's reply – See No. 396.
   Kidron appended an accompanying letter to Hammarskjöld's letter (16 August, 93.03/3042/3) in which it said that the text of the letter before us is an amended one, after Kidron had commented to Hammarskjöld on a number of remarks in the original text which offended Israel.

391. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to E. Elath (London). 20 August 1956

Coded Tel. 120; Outg.: 130.09/2321/3

Summary

Eytan refers to the proposals being formulated at the London conference regarding Suez which stress the rights of Israeli shipping, without explicitly mentioning Israel. It was desirable to make a concerted effort before the final wording in order that Israel's right be recognised, explicitly or indirectly, so that it should be clear to Egypt that the conference would not be satisfied with freedom of navigation as had been the case until now. Therefore the ambassador was requested to meet with the three Powers at the highest level and to demand this right. If it was hard to obtain such an explicit expression the resolution should at least state that no article in the Constantinople Convention gives the right to violate the freedom of navigation. These instructions are the result of the consultation in which the minister of foreign affairs participated. The minister points out that if the Powers reject the Israeli demand they should at least give renewed and additional assurances that Israel's right was guaranteed under the general formula of freedom of navigation for all nations.[2] If in the view of the

embassy the situation in London did not permit them to adopt this line of action they should cable immediately.[3]

Notes

1. Nasser said among other things that in fact the defence of the Suez Canal had always been in Egypt's hands and it had prevented the passage of ships through the Canal even in the period when the British Army was stationed in Egypt. He added that he would not agree that an international body run the Canal, since this would in effect be a blow to Egypt's sovereignty and honour (See *Ha'aretz*, 20 August 1956).
2. In another telegram (Eytan to the Missions Abroad, Tel. 992, 21 August 1956, 130.09/2377/4) it stated that it was desirable to stress in the conclusions that the blockade imposed by Egypt in the Canal and the Straits of Eilat harmed not only Israel but also other states whose ships were carrying cargoes to and from Israel. Therefore the Security Council resolution of 1951 demanded the annullment of all restrictions on passage in the Canal for international shipping, whatever its destination, and was not content with a demand for ending the boycott on Israel shipping alone.
3. Elath replied that he and his colleagues at the embassy did not approve of the proposals. The position of the Western Powers had been determined for some time and Israel had been unable to change it, in spite of its efforts. Only the French supported Israel's position, whilst the joint position reflected the position of the United States and Britain, who wished at this stage only to deal with a general settlement of the Canal problem from the standpoint of the principles on which the settlement would be based and the tools to ensure its implementation, and not to consider other practical issues. The position of the Western Powers was also an outcome of the tight parliamentary situation at the conference which forced them to try and form a united front. Since the conference was only the first stage in a lengthy process, the embassy recommended postponing action until the later stages of the negotiations (Elath to Eytan, Tel. 491, 21 August 1956, 30.102/2450/3).

392. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan. 21 August 1956

Coded Tel. 487; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with the Dutch minister of foreign affairs in which the Dutch ambassador in London took part. Elath began by thanking the minister for his speech at the conference,[1] in which he had also mentioned the Israeli interest. He asked if it would be possible to obtain at the conference a resolution in which Israel's rights of passage through the Canal would be explicitly mentioned. This was particularly necessary after the speech of Krishna Menon.[2] The minister replied that there was no

chance of this because of the crisis situation in the discussions and because the United States and Britain opposed it. After the conference ended Israel would have to be on its guard and to ensure that its interests were upheld.

As for the conference itself, they presumed that it would end without a vote, but 16 states would express support for Dulles' proposal. There was still a difference of opinion as to how the proposals would be conveyed to Nasser, with the Americans calling for diplomatic negotiations with him to begin. The ambassador said that he had been informed that Nasser had not told the Russians in advance anything about his decisions regarding the Canal. However they supported him post factum, although they were afraid of far-reaching consequences in the sphere of international relations which would make it hard for Russia to pursue the foreign policy line adopted after the death of Stalin.

Notes

1. In a speech at the conference on 18 August Luns said, among other things, that the ban imposed by Egypt on Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal in contravention of the Security Council Resolution of 1 September 1951 aroused grave doubts as to their desire to act in accordance with the Constantinople Convention.
2. In a speech on 20 August Krishna Menon referred to the question of Israeli shipping in the Canal. He noted that there had in the past been precedents for a blockade of the Canal and furthermore Egypt was arguing that this was a case of self-defence and that it was acting in accordance with the principles of the U.N. Charter. The correct thing for the offended party to do was to appeal to the International Court of Justice in the Hague (See the embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 477, 21 August 1956, 130.02/2450/3).
3. See No. 387 (Editorial Note).
4. On 20 August the Council of the Istiqlal Party in Morocco adopted a platform which included among other things a demand for the evacuation of the French army from Morocco, active support for the Algerian rebels, negotiation with the United States with regard to its air force bases in Morocco and the strengthening of ties with the Arab states. The following day the party demanded that the sultan dissolve the coalition government and set up in its place a government based on the Istiqlal Party alone. On 27 October a new government was in fact set up in which the Istiqlal was in the majority, and its chief rival, the Democratic Independence Party (P.D.I.) was left out.

393. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan. 21 August 1956

Coded Tel. 489; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ardalan. Elath praised him for his speech and noted that it had been very well received in Israel. He added that Israel was interested in developing economic relations with Iran and particularly in purchasing oil. The minister replied that his government supported Dulles' proposals, but for the sake of peace in the Afro-Asian camp it would not oppose the selection of a committee to conduct negotiations with Nasser. Regarding relations with Israel he answered that they considered Israel to be a state with potential for trade relations. He described the danger which Nasser posed for the internal security of the region and commented on the Arab ability for self-rule.

Notes

1. See No. 27.

394. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow.[1] 21 August 1956

Coded Tel. 991; Outg.: 130.09/2326/6

Summary

The ministry of foreign affairs instructs the embassy to present a Note in reply to the Soviet letter of 9 August 1956[2] concerning Suez. In the Note they should point out that Israel did not accept the Soviet claim that the freedom of navigation in the Canal had not been affected. Since the establishment of the State of Israel Egypt had interfered with the passage of Israeli ships and other ships bound for Israel. This violation had been condemned by the Security Council. Egypt's claim stood in complete contradiction to articles I and XI of the Constantinople Convention. Regarding the non-invitation of Israel to the London conference, Israel points out its geographical proximity to the Canal and that it has a far greater interest in its operation than the countries listed by the Soviet Union, which it demanded be invited to the discussions. In light of all this the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs

expresses its disappointment with the Soviet Union's disavowal of Israel's legitimate interests by ignoring the state's existence as a factor in the settlement of the Canal problem.[4]

Notes

1. A copy was sent to the Israel embassy in London.
2. See No. 376.
3. See No. 373.
4. The full text of the Note, in French, bearing the date 22 August 1956, in File 93.39/546/8.

395. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan. 22 August 1956

Coded Tel. 493; Inc.: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with the Turkish ambassador[1] who informed him of a discussion held by the Afro-Asian delegations at the London conference behind closed doors. In the discussion a rift was revealed between India, Indonesia and Ceylon on the one hand and Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Ethiopia on the other, where the latter wished to support the Western proposals. At the end of the consultation the "rebels" met with Dulles and informed him of their intention to support his proposals, on condition that he agreed that they would present a number of amendments, which would be no more than an ostensible attempt to accommodate Egypt. The split in this group also made things easier for several Western states, like Norway, Denmark and Italy to support the Western proposals. He sees the previous day's discussion as an important victory for the West which makes it easier for the Western states to apply pressure on Nasser. In answer to Elath's question regarding possible measures against Nasser he said that it was too early to speak of this, but economic sanctions were one of the measures.

Notes

1. Suat Hayri Ürgüplü, the Turkish ambassador in London.
2. Muharrem Nuri Birgi, the secretary-general of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who headed the Turkish delegation to the London conference. On the conversation see No. 398.

396. D. Ben-Gurion to D. Hammarskjöld (New York). 23 August 1956

Copy: 130.02/5936/57

Notes

1. No. 390.
2. See No. 382, n. 4.
3. See No. 204.
4. In fact the remarks were made by the British Foreign Office spokesman – See No. 374.
5. No. 383.
6. Kidron, who handed Ben-Gurion's letter to Hammarskjöld, noted that his response was very restrained. He wished to make three comments: a. He had never said that Nasser was accumulating Soviet arms to make peace with Israel, he had no illusions regarding Nasser. b. The negative answer concerning the observers in Nitzana was very grave. c. He hoped that the border demarcation in the Strip would be taken care of. After that he took out a bundle of reports from the region and noted that in contrast to the Egyptians, who had restricted their activities in the Gaza Strip, Israel had actually increased its own activity, was carrying out many patrols, and at times these patrols were crossing the border (See Kidron's telegram to the director- general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. X539, 27 August 1956, 130.09/2333/1. Hammarskjöld's reply see No. 401).

397. Draft of a Memorandum by M. Sherman. New York, 23 August 1956

Draft: 130.02/2452/6

Summary

After a number of conversations at the State Department and in the Petroleum Division of the Department of Interior, he had the impression that government circles in the U.S. do not take the matter of the oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean[1] seriously. In his opinion this is due to the fact that they have not yet digested the nationalisation of the Canal and are afraid of antagonizing the Arabs. Consequently, Israel must make a concentrated effort to get both the United States government and the British government to adopt a clear position which would encourage their oil companies to consider seriously using the pipeline and sending tankers through the Straits. He did not believe that Israel could do this by itself, and therefore

suggested encouraging a group of influential people in Washington and those prominent in the business world to set up a pressure group to persuade the government. In order to activate such a group they must determine in advance the principles whereby they wished to lay and operate the pipeline. He asks to be informed whether this idea was acceptable in Israel, and if so, what those principles were.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 365.
2. On the subsequent developments in this matter see No. 407.

398. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan. 24 August 1956

Coded Tel. 522; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on his meeting with the secretary-general of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Birgi. The latter claimed that the London conference had achieved several things whose importance even outweighed the issue of the Canal for which it had been convened. Among these were the split in the Afro-Asian front and the increased involvement of the United States in the Middle East. In a conversation which they held with Dulles they gained the impression that the United States recognises the danger which Nasser posed for the Middle East. In that same conversation Dulles said that if he succeeded in resolving the Canal issue, he would then set about settling Israel's relations with its neighbours. Birgi pointed out that the Canal crisis had strengthened the common interests of Israel and Turkey in the region and that they respected and appreciated Israel's strength, although they preferred to keep a low profile in relations with it. In his opinion, the danger from Nasser was not military, but political, and any political defeat he suffered would weaken his standing.

Notes

1. Between 29 August and 7 September 1955 a conference took place in London to discuss the future of Cyprus. Greece contended that the island should be granted self-determination, which would enable the Greek majority to declare "Enosis" (union with Greece). Turkey maintained that British rule should be kept, and if this was not possible, the island should be restored to its previous owners – Turkey. The British

suggested a compromise: self-rule for Cyprus. This proposal was not accepted by the parties and the conference ended without a solution.
On 5 September Elath met with the Turkish chargé d'affaires in London who wanted to hear explanations regarding the legal status of the Jewish settlement in Palestine and its relations with the Mandate Government, with the aim of learning from the Israeli experience how to protect the status of the Turkish minority in Cyprus. Elath replied as he thought fit (See Elath to Sharett, Tel. 621, 5 September 1955, 130.09/2320/4).
2. See No. 225.
3. In June 1956 Israel asked for Turkey's approval of the appointment of Gideon Rafael as minister in Ankara, in the place of Maurice Fischer who was due to leave his post at the end of 1956/beginning of 1957.

399. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 26 August 1956

Coded Tel. 307; Outg.: 130.11/2507/4

Summary

The division reports on a meeting between the minister of foreign affairs and Soviet Ambassador Abramov. Abramov handed over the original letter about disarmament.[1] The minister told Abramov that the government was about to discuss the question of the Russian property[2] and he expressed satisfaction. Afterwards a conversation ensued about the London conference and Arab-Israeli relations. In answer to the minister of foreign affairs' question as to how to interpret Shepilov's remarks at the conference about the freedom of navigation, Abramov replied that he had no additional information and this proved that in Moscow they did not attach special significance to the issue or that they had not expected any real results.[3] Afterwards they discussed Israeli-Arab relations in general. The minister pointed out that all Israel's efforts to enter into dialogue with the Arabs had come to nothing.[4] Abramov noted that concrete steps must be taken. The Israeli public must be prepared for peace by means of propaganda and the peace movement exploited. Meir replied that in peace movement gatherings the Israeli representatives had met with opposition and instead of talks about peace there was conflict.

Notes

1. See No. 347 and n.1 there.
2. In fact the discussion took place during the government meeting on 16 September whereas on 3 September a ministerial committee on the Russian property discussed the matter. In the debate in committee they dwelt on the legal and political difficulty

of settling the problem. Most of the property in question, in the Russian compound in Jerusalem, was registered in the property records in the name of Russia, but on grounds of security and development it was impossible to give up these areas. Therefore it was suggested to enter into negotiations about two options: purchasing the property, wholly or in part, or leasing it for a very long period (See the East European division to the Israel embassy in Moscow, Tel. 333, 4 September 1956, 130.09/2326/6).

The committee's recommendations were discussed in the government plenum on 16 September. It was decided to send a Note or memorandum to the Soviet Government suggesting entering into negotiations about a settlement of the property. If the answer was positive the negotiations would be conducted according to the guidelines set by the ministerial committee.

3. On the discussions of the London conference see No. 387 (Editorial Note). In his speech at the conference on 17 August Shepilov said among other things that they must agree to Egyptian sovereignty over the Suez Canal, but that Egypt must undertake a commitment to ensure freedom of navigation for all nations. Meir reported on the conversation with Abramov at the government meeting on 26 August and about this matter she stated the following: "I asked him if we were correctly interpreting Shepilov's statement when he said "navigation for all" and whether this also included us. To this Abramov replied: "Undoubtedly" (See the stenographic record of the government meeting, ISA, 26 August 1956).
4. Refers apparently to the Labour Party politician, Maurice Orbach. No details of his talks in Egypt in 1956 were found.
5. See No. 205 (Editorial Note).
6. See Nos. 288 and 295.
7. On the meeting which was held on 14 April 1949 see Vol. 2, No. 496.

400. Minister of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 27 August 1956

Copy: 130.11/2497/3

Summary

The memorandum summarises the activities of Israel on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union at the end of a year of action, and outlines proposals and guidelines for the future.

The assumption that the Soviet Union is searching for a way to approach world public opinion, and is taking the Jewish factor into account in this context has been borne out. In fact, recently the Soviet Union had eased a number of restrictions and enabled more numerous contacts with Israel and with Jewish organisations.[3] However these concessions were marginal and efforts must continue in a number of directions:

1. To exploit every opportunity to maintain contact between Jews from abroad with Russian Jews, in the form of delegations, artists, visits, etc.

They must work principally with circles which the Soviets respect and are interested in (socialists, liberals, commercial circles and so forth).

2. They must continue to maintain the interest and tension surrounding the issue of Soviet Jewry.

3. They must continue the information campaign among non-Jews.

4. It is preferable that this activity not be conducted by the embassy itself but by local people, Jewish and non-Jewish.

5. As far as possible they must avoid giving the campaign for Soviet Jewry an anti-Soviet hue.

The aim of the campaign is to attain free status for the Jews of the Soviet Union, which means the right of self-determination, including the right to organisation and spiritual and religious self-determination; the right of the Jews of the Soviet Union to be in communication with Jews in other countries and finally the right to emigrate to Israel.

The memorandum also contains a discussion on the question whether the issue of Soviet Jewry should be linked with that of the Soviet Union's Middle East policy. The conclusion is that this must be avoided as far as possible. Of course they must also be active in this area and to arouse world public opinion, and experience shows that it was possible to act on two fronts simultaneously.

Notes

1. This circular, dated 5 September 1955, in File 130.02/2496/18.
2. See No. 249 and n.1.
3. See No.262 and notes there.
4. See No. 279 and notes 1, 2.
5. See No. 262.
6. In a meeting which the Soviet leaders held with the leader of the Labour Party during their visit to Britain in April 1956, Gaitskell said among other things: "We are all also concerned about the situation of the Jewish minority in the Soviet Union" (See Avner's telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 948, 25 April 1956, 130.09/2321/2).
7. See No. 262.
8. In consultations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 1956, N. Levanon reported that the three Scandinavian heads of government, Erlander from Sweden, Gerhardsen from Norway and Hansen from Denmark, openly expressed anxiety about the situation of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union. See No.239.
9. With the establishment of the "Bar" department of "Nativ," whose function was to bring the issue of the Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to the attention of the Western states.
10. The enclosure was not found.

401. D. Hammarskjöld (New York) to D. Ben-Gurion. 28 August 1956

Copy: 93.02/193/18

Notes

1. No. 396.
2. See No. 204.
3. The remarks were made at the opening of the Eighth Mapai Party Conference on 26 August 1956. Ben-Gurion also said on that occasion that as long as Israel was not assured of full freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, quiet and security would not reign in the region (See circular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel missions abroad, 27 August 1956, 130.09/2337/4).
4. No. 382.
5. The allusion is to a letter from Burns to the minister of foreign affairs, which was sent at Hammarskjöld's request, and which contained an instruction "to balance" Burns' appeal to Egypt following the increased numbers of incidents on the Gaza Strip border. This letter was not found. See No. 382 and n. 4 there.
6. In which it said, among other things, that the military, paramilitary and irregular forces of one side would not carry out hostile acts against the other side.
7. See No. 344.
8. See No. 204 and n. 6 there.
9. In which it said that on the Egyptian side of the border, opposite the El Auja area, no Egyptian defensive positions should be nearer to El Auja than El Qouseima and Abou Aoueigila (See Vol. 3, appendix F, p. 693).
10. In which it said that the area of the village of El Auja would be demilitarized and the Egyptian and Israeli forces would be totally excluded from it. The chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission and the U.N. observers attached to this commission would be responsible for ensuring the implementation of this provision (ibid.).
11. Burns' letter to Myerson, dated 19 June 1956, in File 130.16/1954/7.
12. See Vol. 4, Companion Volume, Editorial Note on pp. 133-135.
13. See No. 382, n. 4.
14. No. 382.
15. In his talks in April-May 1956 with the leaders of Israel and Egypt Hammarskjöld obtained their agreement to Burns' suggestion to set up observation posts on both sides of the Gaza Strip demarcation line, which would be manned by U.N. observers, and also to mobile patrols by these observers with the aim of inspecting the Israel-Egypt border. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
16. Ben-Gurion's reply – See No. 410. Tekoah's comments about this document, see in his letter to Ben-Gurion and others, 9 September 1956, 93.03/3042/3.

402. E. Elath (London) to W. Eytan. 28 August 1956

Coded Tel. 538: Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Loy Henderson. Elath raised the question of freedom of navigation in the Canal which had to be protected in any negotiations to be held with Nasser by the Committee of Five. Any attempt to ignore the issue on the assumption that, if the general issue was dealt with, Israel's rights would automatically be guaranteed, was doomed to failure. Nasser was liable to conclude that the Israeli issue did not interest the Powers, and to create a new precedent for the policy of discrimination. Sabri's latest remarks were evidence of this.[2] Henderson said that he understood Israel's concern, and in his view Nasser should not be allowed to interpret a settlement, if achieved, in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner. He said that he was registering Israel's request and that he would be vigilant.

Notes

1. The head of the Committee of Five, Menzies, issued an invitation on 24 August to the Egyptian ambassador in London to meet the members of the committee, so that they could explain to Nasser their views regarding the Canal. On 28 August the ambassador conveyed the reply of Nasser who agreed to meet with the members. The meeting was set for 3 September.
2. On 25 August Sabri declared that Egypt would continue to prevent the passage of vessels carrying war materials to Israel through the Suez Canal. Egypt had the right to do so under Article 10 of the Constantinople Convention, and it would adhere to it as long as it remained in a state of war with Israel (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel embassies abroad, unclassified circular 3, 26 August 1956, 130.09/2377/4).

403. Z. Doriel (Teheran) to S. Rome. 29 August 1956

Copy: 130.15/2565/24

Summary

Doriel reports that as a result of his conversation with Professor Eghbal,[1] the Iranian court minister and rector of Teheran University, he was summoned to meet Prime Minister Hussein Ala. They discussed general

economic and cultural questions, as well as ways of expanding trade and cooperation between Iran and Israel. Doriel emphasised that the absence of normal diplomatic relations led to an abnormal atmosphere and lack of trust which was hampering the development of commercial ties. Ala expressed particular interest in agricultural assistance from Israel, but also fear of Israeli expansionism. He declared that the existence of a flourishing Israel was in accordance with the interests of Iran but that there were obstacles to improving diplomatic relations, particularly Iran's relations with the Baghdad Pact.

Notes

1. In this conversation they discussed ways of making relations between Israel and Iran more meaningful, mainly in the cultural and economic fields. Eghbal said that in his personal opinion there was no reason why Iran should not establish normal relations with Israel and promised to inform the shah about their discussion (The letter, from 22 August, is in file 130.15/2565/24).
2. Khalil Taleghani, the Iranian minister of agriculture.
3. The meeting with the minister of agriculture took place on 3 September. Doriel suggested some ideas for agricultural cooperation and the minister said that the director-general of his ministry would be responsible for dealing with the matter (See Doriel to the Foreign Ministry, Tel. 74, 4 September 1956, 130.15/2565/24).
4. See No. 27, n. 5.
5. Iran had recognised Israel de facto on 15 March 1950, and was afterwards represented in Israel by a "special representative." However Iran refused to accept an Israeli representative in Teheran with a similar status. It closed its representation in Israel in July 1951 under pressure from religious circles in Iran. The official explanation for this was "budgetary difficulties" and it was explained that the Iranian legation in Jordan would represent Iran in Israel as well. See Vol. 6, Nos. 222 and 268.
6. The reduced power of religious circles in Iran after the military coup which led to the fall of Prime Minister Mosaddeq in August 1953.
7. Ali G. Ardalan, the Iranian foreign minister.
8. The Foreign Ministry replied that they see that Doriel is concentrating his efforts on restoring diplomatic relations, but it is doubtful whether the chances are good. He should therefore also try to bring about practical steps, particularly in the fields of trade and the economy. As Sharett and Ben-Horin were about to pass through Teheran in September on their way to the Far East, it was suggested that Doriel consult with them (See Levin to Doriel, 17 September 1956, 130.15/2565/24). For Ben-Horin's view of Doriel's activities in Iran, see No. 208, n.11.

404. R. Shiloah (Washington) to the United States Division. 31 August 1956

Coded Tel. WIA 639; Outg.: 93.01/2213/2

Summary

Shiloah reports on a conversation with Murphy. Shiloah brought up Israel's fears regarding the negotiating process with Nasser and cited Nasser's statement that Egypt was entitled to interfere with the passage of Israeli ships under article 10 of the Constantinople Convention.[2] He said that Israel wants more specific assurances, also in writing as the secretary of state had originally promised.[3] Murphy promised to check this. Shiloah then brought up the subject of the delays at the end of the plane transaction with Canada, and noted that in fact a situation had been created in which Israel was being punished for Nasser's aggression. Murphy said that he regretted this development and would look into the matter. Shiloah mentioned the loan.[5] Murphy replied that the matter was now on the State Department's desk. He had discussed it with the secretary and with Hoover and he knew that their attitude was favourable. Shiloah said that Israel requested a speedy decision.

Notes

1. See for example, No. 380.
2. Compare No. 402 and n. 2 there.
3. See No. 375.
4. In this conversation (apparently on 30 August) Pearson said that his government had decided to delay the release of the planes. It accepted the view of the United States and France that the news of the release at this juncture was liable to harm the effort to bring Nasser to negotiate (See Comay to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 227, 31 August 1956, 130.02/2456/9).
5. In a previous telegram (XA518, 17 August 1956, in File 93.01/2213/2) Eban reported that he had heard from Johnston that the directors of the Export-Import Bank had asked him whether he saw any reason against the loan, and he had answered that he saw no objection on condition that the matter was economically feasible. He added that there was a complete separation between the loan and the question of the Jordan waters. The subject of the loan was raised again by Eban in a conversation with Dulles on 11 September – See No. 415.

405. J. Tsur and S. Z. Shragai (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and N. Goldmann. 31 August 1956

Coded Tel. 465; Inc.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur and Shragai report on the situation in Morocco. The internal situation was uncertain,[1] and in light of al-Fassi's attack on immigration to Israel,[2] it had been decided to speed up the departure of the immigrants in the camp.[3] It was necessary to continue to apply pressure on the members of the Moroccan government, to hold talks with Moroccan leaders and to make preparations for a conference in the United States at the beginning of October, if until then there was no progress with emigration. The task was not an easy one, since in fact there was no functioning government in Morocco and there were no leaders available with whom to discuss the question of emigration.

Notes

1. See No. 392, n. 4.
2. In this article by Allal al-Fassi, one of the leaders of the Istiqlal Party, which was published in the party journal on 29 August, there is a general attack on immigration to Israel, which is described as an "Arab land subjugated by Zionist imperialism" and an appeal to the Jews of Morocco to continue to do their duty by their motherland (A translation of the article in its entirety in File 130.10/2525/10).
3. See No. 354.
4. The Parti Démocratique de l'Indépendance, the rival of the Istiqlal Party.
5. On a discussion on the issue of emigration from Morocco held at the Jewish Agency headquarters with the participation of Easterman, see No. 416.

406. K. Katz (Budapest) to the East European Division. 31 August 1956

Coded Tel. 464; Inc.: 130.09/2295/13

Katz reports on a farewell conversation[1] in Budapest in which he brought up the problem of immigration and the "Prisoners of Zion" (imprisoned Zionist activists) in Hungary. The minister of foreign affairs[2] and the prime minister[3] promised that Hungary would in the course of time enable all those who wished to emigrate to do so. Regarding the Prisoners of Zion,

the prime minister promised that the requests would be discussed on an individual basis.[5]

Notes

1. Katz left Budapest following his appointment as minister in Warsaw.
2. Imre Horváth, the foreign minister of Hungary from 30 July 1956.
3. András Hegedüs, the Hungarian prime minister.
4. See No. 239, n.14.
5. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reply this conversation was described as "good" and they asked that an up-to-date and detailed list of Prisoners of Zion be sent (East European Division to Katz, Tel. 545, 3 September 1956, 130.09/2295/11).
   In addition the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent instructions to the acting chargé d'affaires in Budapest, Shmuel Bentsur, to raise the issue of immigration in his talks (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Bentsur, Tel. 547, 11 September 1956, ibid.). The latter acted accordingly, and on 3 November he received a Note from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which said among other things: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announces that the Hungarian National Government, in recognising the right to immigration of those Jewish citizens of Hungary who express their wish to do so, gives its consent to their emigration" (The Note in File 130.11/2052/156).

407. R. Shiloah (Washington) to G. Meir. 1 September 1956

Copy: 130.02/2452/6

Summary

Shiloah reports on developments concerning the oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean.[1] It is clear to him that if Israel really wishes to carry out the project, or at least to investigate thoroughly the chances of carrying it out, it must appoint someone of stature, an experienced person with contacts who will devote himself wholeheartedly to the job. A prominent economist, well-versed in matters of oil and its transportation, must be put at his disposal, as well as a lawyer with experience in the field. This was also the conclusion of Eban and Sherman with whom he had talked in recent days.[5]

Notes

1. See No. 397.
2. See, for example, Shiloah's report on a conversation with an aide of Murchison, one of the Texas oil barons and the main shareholder in Gulf Oil, who had approached Ben Cohen and Dave Ginzburg asking if Israel would agree to discuss the

practicality of laying an oil pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean (Tel. WIA529, 6 August 1956, 93.01/2219/10). In a further telegram concerning contacts with this group Shiloah reported a conversation with another of Murchison's aides who also expressed interest in the idea of a pipeline and agreed to hold the negotiations about this in Israel (See Shiloah to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 564, 13 August 1956, 130.02/2450/2).

3. See Shiloah and Sherman's conversation with Gerald Mann (12 August 1956, 130.02/2452/6).
4. This refers to Oscar Gass, a former economic adviser at the U.S. Treasury.
5. In consultation with Minister of Finance Eshkol, who was in the United States in September, it was agreed, among other things, to contact an adviser conversant with the problems of an oil pipeline who had contacts in the American administration and to assign him to present a detailed report on the pipeline. Eshkol also approved approaching a lawyer "of prominent status" to sound out whether he would be prepared to act for Israel on the subject of the pipeline.

408. Y. Tekoah to Major-General E.L.M. Burns (Jerusalem). 3 September 1956

Copy: 130.02/2440/7

Notes

1. Fedayeen, "those who sacrifice themselves," was the Arabic term used to describe infiltrators to Israel, mainly the special units recruited in Gaza since the end of 1953 and used for intelligence and terrorist missions in Israel since August 1955. Some of them also operated from inside Jordan.

409. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 3 September 1956

Coded Tel. 480; Inc.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau who again stressed that there was no other way out except Nasser's surrender or war. The chances of war seemed to him to be about 50%. Nasser was being bolstered by Russia which was going too far in its threats and had recently even sent significant quantities of weapons and volunteers in the guise of technicians. At the same time he believes that the Russians are not prepared for war and hope that the West would be deterred. Pineau praised Israel's cautious stance,

and advised persisting with it. Even if there was a military campaign, there was no intention of embroiling Israel in it, at least not in the initial stage. However, he suggests not allowing the Egyptians to be too relaxed along the Israeli border, and it was desirable that there should not be quiet there. Pineau repeated the promise of freedom of navigation for Israeli shipping in the Canal. He also pointed out that there was a change of mood in the United States regarding the supply of arms to Israel. France was also working on the Canadians to speed up the supply of planes.[6] Regarding the pipeline from Eilat to the Mediterranean, he said that it seemed to him that the project was viable, but it should be kept separate from the Suez affair and dealt with after the Suez crisis was over.

Notes

1. Refers to the split in the camp of the Bandung states – see No. 395.
2. The Soviet Union carried out a number of nuclear tests in March-April and in August-September 1956.
3. The remarks were made in a conversation on 24 August, during the London conference – see Najar's telegram to Eytan, No. 58, 24 August 1956, 130.09/2321/4.
4. Details of the proposal are given below:
   1) A council would be set up to be responsible for the security of the Canal.
   2) The Egyptians would reach agreement with states interested being part of a consortium which would be responsible for the management, operation and development of the Canal. The Egyptian Government would be represented in the consortium.
   (See Elath to the British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 559, 31 August 1956, 130.09/2321/4.)
5. The islands of Tiran and Sanafir, at the mouth of the Gulf of Eilat, under Saudi ownership, were leased to Egypt in 1954 in order to enable it to impose a maritime blockade on Eilat.
6. On developments concerning the sale of the Canadian planes to Israel see No. 429.

410. D. Ben-Gurion to D. Hammarsjköld. 4 September 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/4

Notes

1. No. 401.
2. See No. 411.
3. See No. 204.
4. For Hammarskjöld's reply, see No. 417.

411. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 4 September 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 22 (New York 493); Outg.: 130.02/2448/4

Summary

Tekoah reports on the prime minister's conversation with Burns. They discussed the following subjects: the question of the demarcation of the border line in the Gaza Strip; a meeting place for the Egyptian committee; Israel's opposition to the presence of the observers in Nitzana; the establishment of a U.N. observer post on Lake Tiberias and the Israeli fortifications in the demilitarized zone.[1] Ben-Gurion repeated Israel's position demanding implementation of the armistice articles as a whole, and particularly of the main articles about preserving the peace, preventing blockade, and of Article VIII in the agreement with Jordan, and not getting involved in such relatively minor issues as the powers of the observers.

Notes

1. See No. 378. A summary of Israel's position on this question, prepared for the meeting, in File 130.16/2953/11.
2. In File 130.16/2947/12.

412. M. Kidron (New York) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 4 September 1956

Coded Tel. X553; Inc.: 130.02/2404/6

Kidron reports on a conversation with the U.N. secretary-general. The secretary had before him Burns' report on his conversation with Ben-Gurion. Kidron himself was aided by a report he had received on this conversation.[1] There were substantial differences between these two documents and Kidron tried to explain them and to correct misunderstandings. In the course of the conversation the secretary gave Kidron a letter for the prime minister, which according to him he had written after sad reflection following the Burns report. In the letter he said that it was clear to him that the prime minister did not wish for cooperation with the U.N. except on those issues which were likely to promote Israel's demands. Consequently, he was cancelling his planned visit in October unless it was clear to him that he would receive

something substantial.[3] Kidron tried to dissuade him from sending the letter and said that it was impossible to resolve the problem between Israel and the Arabs through technical arrangements of one kind or another if the sides did not have any desire to live in peace. The secretary said he would reconsider the letter. Kidron also asked if he intended to report to the Security Council. Hammarskjöld replied that he would not go into details to the Council but would give a general description of the situation created around the Nitzana question and that of freedom of navigation, but he would think again about this subject too.

Notes

1. No. 411.
2. The matter is unknown.
3. Hammarskjöld's letter, dated 4 September, in File 93.03/3042/3.

413. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 4 September 1956

Coded Tel. 570; Inc. 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Lloyd. They began with the subject of arms, and Elath explained that the growing tension necessitated a fresh discussion regarding the supply of the Centurions, as promised in their previous conversation,[1] when Kirkpatrick had suggested that if the situation worsened they would discuss the issue again. In addition Israel was interested in 50 Sherman tanks, described as scrap iron, and in ten Meteor planes for training purposes. Lloyd promised to look into the question of the Shermans and the Meteors urgently and to give an answer "in the next few days." From this it was clear that he was not prepared to encourage Israel in hopes of receiving the Centurions in the near future.

Afterwards they proceeded to discuss the situation on the Canal and freedom of navigation. Lloyd pointed out that if Britain had had the military capability when Nasser declared nationalisation it would have used force. The British government was firm in its determination today not to make concessions to Nasser. He complained about those that he described as "the friends of Israel in Britain," who did not support the British government's forceful stance towards Nasser. Elath understood that he was referring to the Labour Party in general and to its Jewish members in particular. Lloyd

repeated his promise[2] regarding the protection of Israel's rights in any new settlement concerning navigation through the Canal, but he refrained from promising to convey appropriate proposals on this question to the Menzies Committee.

Notes

1. See No. 389.
2. See No. 367.

414. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 10 September 1956

Coded Tel. 583; Inc.: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Gaitskell which took place prior to the anticipated debate in Parliament.[1] He explained to him the seriousness of Israel's situation and the need to strengthen it. Gaitskell promised his full assistance and praised Israel's cautious and moderate stance until now. In his view Eden would not go to open war against Egypt, unless there was a local deterioration which would flare into a big conflagration. The main factor inhibiting Eden was the attitude of the Opposition, and the American position was only secondary.

Note

1. The debate in the House of Commons took place on 12-13 September. Eden, who opened the debate, said that Britain was making every effort to find a peaceful solution of the Canal crisis which would take into account the legitimate interests of Egypt and also adequately safeguard the interests of the many states to whom the Canal was of vital concern. Gaitskell who spoke on behalf of the Labour Party voiced criticism of the government's handling of the crisis and demanded that any solution be in the framework of the U.N. He called on the government to bring the issue before the Security Council and expressed the hope that when the matter was discussed in the U.N. the issue of Israel's freedom of navigation in the Canal would again be raised. Eden, who replied to the debate, said that it was the government's desire to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the Canal and that it had been acting so far in accordance with the U.N. Charter. He promised that with the exception of an emergency his government would not use force before it brought the issue before the Security Council. With regard to Israel, he observed that if Nasser had succeeded in his actions his next step would have been to attack Israel.

415. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division. 11 September 1956

Coded Tel. XA567; Outg. 93.01/2213/3

Summary

Eban reports on an hour-long conversation with Dulles. Eban began by referring to the latest developments.[1] They were proof of Nasser's disregard for the whole world. This proved that if Nasser decided to attack Israel he would not be deterred by world opinion or by the opposition of the Powers. If the affair ended in victory for Nasser the West would lose its control over a crucial traffic artery and Nasser would receive an impetus for further gains. Therefore it was important to clarify the United States position regarding Nasser, not only on the Canal issue but in general. He then proceeded to Israel's problems. He described the problem of weapons supply and asked that the United States persuade Canada to complete the plane transaction and not to raise obstacles. He noted the military preparations in the region and asked about the meaning of the many statements he had heard in the United States with regard to the American intention to come to the aid of any state that was attacked. He mentioned Israel's loan request,[4] the problem of the supply of oil, the possibility of laying the pipeline and freedom of navigation.

Below are Dulles' replies:

1. He shared Israel's assessment about Nasser's lack of regard for world opinion.
2. Nasser must not be allowed to gain a victory, but force must on no account be used. The West had sufficient resources to bring him down.
3. The United States did not see any benefit in bringing the affair before the Security Council.
4. He agreed that Israel should be included among the nations with which the United States was consulting at all stages and he would do so. In the meantime United States policy was to exert pressure short of war to assure the rights of the Canal users. Regarding freedom of navigation, he said: "You can be confident that in any arrangement to be worked out, the U.S.A. will not entertain or accept any formula which might exclude Israel as beneficiary of rights belonging to all nations."
He asked if Eban had acted to obtain this clarification in writing. Eban replied that a letter had been sent.[6] Dulles promised to study the wording of the reply.
5. He gave instructions to put pressure on Canada regarding the plane transaction.[7]

6. The United States intended to give real assistance to any state in the region that was attacked. At an appropriate time the United States would clarify its position in this regard.
7. With regard to the loan a paper was currently being drafted in the State Department.[9] Were it not for the Suez affair he would already have made a decision in this regard.
8. He was interested in the pipeline idea. The State Department would be happy to discuss the issue with the private institutions which had expressed interest.[10]

Notes

1. The Committee of Five ("The Menzies Committee") which had been appointed following the London conference conducted negotiations with Egypt between 3-9 September. During the discussions it emerged that Egypt rejected the recommendations of the London conference and was opposed to any international participation in the operation of the Suez Canal, insisted on its full sovereignty over the Canal and was prepared to grant freedom of passage through it to all ships without discrimination, on condition that the first two principles were observed.
   Following the failure of the talks the British prime minister announced at the opening of the debate in Parliament on 12 September the decision of the United States, Britain and France to establish an association of states using the Canal, and to invite additional states to join the association. Dulles reacted on 10 September to the breakdown of the talks by expressing disappointment that the Egyptians had rejected the proposals regarding international supervision over the Canal. President Eisenhower announced at a press conference on 11 September that the United States was committed to a peaceful and reasonable solution of the Suez Canal dispute.
2. See No. 381.
3. Under this agreement the United States undertook to release, without publicity, several items of arms in order to make it easier for Canada to complete the plane deal with Israel. These were: 5 helicopters, 1,100 half-tracks and 400 Browning 0.5 machine-guns (See the embassy in Washington to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WIA624, 24 August 1956, 93.01/2213/2).
4. See No. 404.
5. In September 1955 the management of the Socony Vacuum company, which until then had supplied Israel with about an eighth of its oil needs, announced that it intended to close down its business activities in Israel over the next two years, as a result of Saudi pressure. Israel conducted lengthy negotiations with the company and in the end the company's holdings in Israel were sold to an American-Jewish businessman, Rudolf Sonneborn, who founded the Sonol fuel company in Israel.
6. No. 381.
7. The State Department did indeed act. On 12 September Comay was informed in Ottawa that the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recommended to Foreign Minister Pearson, who was in Paris at the time, to release the planes, whether the release was given publicity or not. Pearson's response was not forthcoming (See Lourie to Tsur, Tel.523, 13 September 1956, 130.09/2347/3).
8. The sentence is unclear in the original.

9. In another telegram (WA680, dated 12 September, in File 93.01/2213/3) Eban announced to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that this paper was ready and had been presented to Hoover.
10. Eshkol visited the United States in September in connection with the loan for development of irrigation projects in Israel and the oil pipeline from Eilat. For a summary of the consultations with him, see No. 407, n. 5.
11. See No. 397.
12. See No. 418.

416. West European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Paris. 11 September 1956

Coded Tel. 509; Outg.: 130.09/2347/3

Summary

The division reports to the embassy in Paris and to the representative of the Jewish Agency there about a discussion in the Jewish Agency Executive regarding immigration from Morocco.[1] It had been decided to continue talks with Moroccan government members, in spite of the government crisis there,[2] and to insist on the emigration of the 50,000 people who had expressed their wish to leave and are entitled to do so even according to the principle of individual emigration. They must make sure that several thousand people presented applications for exit visas. They must recruit influential people in the United States and Europe to press for the right of the Moroccan Jews to immigrate to Israel, without attacking their government.

Notes

1. See No. 405.
2. See No. 392, n. 4.
3. See No. 405, n. 2.

417. D. Hammarskjöld (New York) to D. Ben-Gurion. 12 September 1956

Copy: 130.16/2947/12

Notes

1. No. 410.
2. See No. 412 and n.3 there.

418. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Meir. 12 September 1956

Coded Tel.WIA679; Outg. 93.01/2213/3

Summary

Eban reports on a two-hour conversation with the U.N. secretary-general focusing on his latest letters.[1] Eban explained that Israel found it difficult to understand the secretary's excitement and his concentration on secondary problems, which diverted his attention from the main issue. The Arab states were rejecting outright the very idea of living side by side with Israel and the notion of mutual commitments. This rejection had engendered in Israel a far less important rejection of a few proposals that had been put to it, without any parallel progress on the Arab side towards enforcement of the principal articles of the armistice agreements.

The secretary thanked Eban for his frankness and informed him that his mission had been born at the beginning of the year when there was a real danger of war in the region. The British and the Americans had proposed resolving the problem by creating large areas of no man's land in the region and the appointment of a U.N. representative with broad powers. Hammarskjöld had thwarted these schemes, and in the end these plans had been taken off the agenda; in their place, to placate the two powers, he had proposed a less far-reaching plan. Furthermore, in the spring Dulles had informed him that there was a fear of war in the region, and in such an event the United States would come to the aid of the side attacked; therefore he had requested that the observer force be capable of at least indicating the fact of aggression, and that it was more than simply a localised incident. All of these circumstances had compelled him to make the requests which he had made to Israel. He believed that the proposals he had made were innocuous for Israel and could be acceptable to it, and he asked that Israel should study

them and try to accept something which would show its position in a more positive light, not necessarily for the Arabs, but for the U.N. itself.

After reading the prime minister's letter and hearing Eban's remarks he would study his letter[3] again and perhaps alter it. In the meantime he asked to delay transmitting it. In conclusion he asked Israel to study his requests again, and understand that he was in a difficult position and needed its assistance.

Notes

1. See Nos. 412, 417.
2. A telegram from Tekoah, dated 11 September 1956 (in File 130.09/2332/1) gives a review of the efforts to stabilise the situation on the Egyptian border, including proposals to erect a territorial obstacle, to demarcate the border and to arrive at a local commanders' agreement.
3. No. 417.
4. This refers to a conference under Article XII of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement, which enables the U.N. secretary-general to summon the sides in order to reconsider, amend or cancel any condition in the Armistice Agreement with the exception of Articles I and II.
5. On 30 August an Israeli military vehicle ran over a mine north of Nitzana. Two soldiers were killed and four wounded. In response the I.D.F. attacked three targets in the Gaza Strip on the night between 30-31 August. In this attack 13 Egyptian soldiers were killed.
6. This letter was not found.

419. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Meir. 13 September 1956

Original: 130/02/2404/6

Summary

Eban proposes observing a "ceasefire" in relations with Hammarsjköld. Basically the secretary was not a negative factor or hostile to Israel and it must be understood that he was acting in the context of a certain legal framework which did not leave him unlimited scope for manoeuvre. The current international situation enabled the isolation of Egypt and for this reason it was desirable to avoid open contention with Hammarskjöld who was supported by both the West and the East and world public opinion. It was desirable to prevent his decision to announce the failure of his mission and also the cancellation of his visit to the region in October – which would make it possible to reduce the Assembly's focus on the Palestine issue. Consequently, they should compromise partially with some of his

demands, particularly those which were of a procedural nature only. He therefore suggested: 1. Allowing the stationing of an observer for the Lake of Tiberias for a limited period of time. 2. Demarcating the border in Gaza. The main issue was the demarcation and not who would do it. 3. Agreeing to the presence of U.N. observers in Nitzana. He would be sending a draft of a letter containing the above proposals.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 418.
2. Such a draft was not found and how this matter was dealt with subsequently is unknown.

420. A. Liveran (New York) to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. 14 September 1956

Coded Tel. 575; Inc. 130.02/2448/5

Notes

1. The meeting was called following the increasing tension along the border. On 10 September six I.D.F. soldiers were killed in a Jordanian ambush near al-Dawayima near to Bet Guvrin. In response the I.D.F. raided a Jordanian police station in Khirbet ar Rahwa and the nearby Jordanian outpost. In the raid 20 Jordanian soldiers were killed. On 12 September three Israeli guards were killed near to En Hazeva. In response the I.D.F. raided the Jordanian police station in Gharandal and destroyed it. In this raid 10 Jordanians were killed. Later on the Armistice Commission placed the responsibility for this incident on Jordan.
2. At the meeting the secretary said that he saw a serious danger in the situation that had developed on the border, and since circumstances prevented him from convening the Security Council he was sending a verbal note to Israel and the Jordanians. He emphasised that he saw the situation created following the Israeli reprisal raids as dangerous not only because of the immediate responses, such as the renewed incursions, but because it could adversely affect the possibility of making progress in other areas (See Liveran to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NWTA162, 14 September 1956, 93.01/2213/3).

421. J. Tsur (Paris) to A. Lourie and M. Bartur. 14 September 1956

Coded Tel. 542; Inc.: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Georges-Picot, the director of the Suez Company. He said that his company was interested in the pipeline. He was well versed in the details and knew that the project was viable from both a financial and technical point of view. He said that apparently they would not return to the Canal, and therefore they were interested in investing "several billion francs" which they possessed in a similar project. He believed that the problem of entry to the Straits of Eilat would be resolved without any particular difficulty. He asked if Israel would be prepared to give a concession to a foreign company. Tsur replied that in this case Israel would be inclined to set up a company with government participation. Tsur conveyed details of the conversation to Kosloff.[2]

Notes

1. On his way to the United States, Eshkol stopped at Orly Airport near Paris and held a brief conversation with Tsur regarding the Eilat-Haifa pipeline project. Since he did not actually go to Paris, the proposed meeting with Georges-Picot did not take place (See J. Tsur, *Paris Diary*, p. 283 [Hebrew]).
2. Israel Kosloff, the adviser on fuel matters in the Treasury, was in Paris at the time. He met with the director of oil affairs in France who also displayed a sympathetic approach with regard to the pipeline, and suggested at the initial stage ordering a survey from a French company specialising in the construction and operation of oil pipelines – TRAPIL. Kosloff reported on this conversation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Treasury and requested approval to order the survey (See his telegram of 13 September, 130.02/2450/3). Approval was given but immediately afterwards an instruction was given to stop the negotiations in France since similar negotiations had begun in the United States (See Arnon and Bartur to the embassy in Paris, Tel. 559, 21 September 1956, ibid.). Tsur complained about this (See his telegram 525, 23 September 1956, ibid.) and Meir decided that they should not stop the contacts with the French but only try and delay the ordering of the survey until information was forthcoming from Eshkol (See Meir to Tsur, Tel. 574, 24 September 1956, ibid.).

422. Y. Meroz (Washington) to J. Herzog. 15 September 1956

Coded Tel. 694; Inc. 93.01/2213/3

Summary

Meroz reports that he had been summoned urgently on the morning of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to the State Department. He had sent Argaman in his stead. There he was handed a statement from MacArthur, the most senior official that day in the State Department (For the text of the statement see the Main Volume, p. 706). In reply Argaman said that he would convey the statement to his government and added several remarks concerning the recent incidents. MacArthur listened without responding.[2]

Notes

1. See No. 420, n. 1.
2. Elath received a similar invitation in London, but he deferred the meeting until the following day. In the meeting, which took place with Nutting, the latter expressed his government's concern over the events and stressed that their approach to Israel was friendly and their attitude "absolutely objective," and therefore he was asking Israel to refrain in future from acts which could lead to a catastrophe. See Elath's telegram to the British Commonwealth Division, No. 506, 16 September 1956, 130.09/2321/4.
The reply of the United States division to the embassy in Washington was cabled on 19 September saying: " We think there is room for a diplomatic response on your part to the State Department's statement on the Day of Atonement, which should point out the unceasing Jordanian provocation which reached a peak with the murder of the six, and quote from the Armistice Commission's resolution about it [...] Agree that we must avoid publicity seeing that the State Department avoided this and the matter was hushed up in the press" (See the division's telegram to the Israel embassy in Washington, No. 439, 19 September 1956, 130.09/2311/9).

423. Israel Embassy in Moscow to the East European Division. 16 September 1956

Coded Tel. 522; Inc.: 130.09/2326/8

Summary

The embassy reports that on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the synagogues were filled with thousands of worshippers, including many young people. For lack of room hundreds stood in the street adjacent to the central synagogue.

424. M. Shneerson (Jerusalem) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 17 September 1956

Copy: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Shneerson reports that the previous day the British chargé d'affaires Westlake had read him a draft of a British government statement concerning the establishment of the Central Association of Suez Canal Users, its principles and the rules of membership. He had not given him a copy, but had allowed him to take notes. Westlake also pointed out that in Britain's view any association of users was considered a temporary arrangement and the permanent arrangement could only be according to the resolutions of the 18 states in London. The full text is in the Main Volume, pp. 708-709.

Notes

1. The remarks were made in the course of the debate that took place on 12-13 September, see No. 414, n. 1.

425. British Commonwealth Division and West European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassadors in London and Paris. 18 September 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 66; Outg.: 130.02/2409/8

Summary

The divisions instruct the ambassadors in London and Paris to meet with the minister of foreign affairs (or senior officials) and to raise Israel's demand for recognition as a user of the Suez Canal and of its right to join the Central Association of Suez Canal Users. The aim at this stage was only to raise the demand, since it had not yet been decided whether to demand to join. They must argue that the definition of user did not do justice to Israel since its non-use of the Canal was due to the fact that the Canal was closed to it. If it had had the opportunity to use it, Israeli trade through the Canal would have attained a high level. Even if this claim by Israel was rejected,

it was intended at least to ensure its right to join as an affiliate, although the definitions of affiliate were not entirely satisfactory. In the course of the conversation it must be made clear that Israel was insisting vigorously on its right to freedom of passage through the Canal. It should be understood that if the Powers again ignored Israel's claim, it would not accept this and would consider what measures it could take in order to realise its rights.

Notes

1. See No. 424.

426. E. Elath (London) to A. Lourie. 18 September 1956

Coded Tel. 626; Inc. 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports that Colonel Henriques, who was about to leave for Israel, had talked with the British War Minister, Head, who was a personal friend, and in conversation the minister had said that the aspiration of the War Office was that Israel should attack Egypt in the event that Britain opened a campaign against Nasser. Head added that if this happened, Britain would not extend any political or military assistance to Israel in order not to antagonise the Arabs. As well as this, Head said that a group was forming in the British Foreign Office which saw a solution to Britain's problems in the Middle East in the strengthening of Iraq and Israel and in reliance on these states.

427. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Warsaw. 19 September 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 69; Inc.: 130.09/2333/1

Summary

The division reports that, according to the Egyptian newspaper *Al Ahram*,[1] Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov had sent a letter to the Syrian president in which he announced that the government of the Soviet Union was not

encouraging immigration of Jews to Israel from its country or from other states of the bloc in order not to aggravate the situation in the region. The letter was sent after the Syrian president had expressed concern about the immigration from Poland.[2] Since the main source of information to the Arabs about immigration is the Hebrew press, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had contacted the newspapers and asked them not to print details about immigration.

Notes

1. Full translation from the Egyptian newspaper *Al Ahram* of 17 September in File 130.11/2503/8.
2. On the immigration from Poland see Nos. 251, 284.

428. A. Eban (New York) to the Division for International Organizations. 19 September 1956

Coded Tel. 583; Outg.: 130.09/2333/1

Summary

Eban suggests that Israel should abstain from voting on the acceptance of the People's Republic of China to the atomic conference.[1] He gives the following reasons: Israel should not vote against as it has always supported recognition of China; the conference is being held in accordance with a U.N. General Assembly resolution; most of the non-Communist countries which recognise China will abstain and the problem of China's status must be decided politically and not in a technical-scientific contest. Nevertheless, the People's Republic of China has never shown any gratitude to Israel for its recognition.

Notes

1. At the Tenth Session of the U.N. General Assembly in December 1955 it was decided to set up an International Atomic Energy Agency. A preparatory group was set up, comprising 12 ambassadors to Washington, charged with drafting the regulations of the new body. On 20 September 1956 a conference opened at the headquarters in New York charged with discussing the proposed set of regulations and approving it (See Cidor to Eban, 19 July 1956, 130.03/1991/2).
2. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved abstention, whilst noting that the tendency was to vote in favour for various reasons, including the need to identify with the Asians and to leave open the possibility that China would decide to exchange

representatives with Israel. In addition to this, voting in favour of China would be interpreted as a gesture on a scientific matter and facilitate Israel's abstention with regard to Communist China's admission to the General Assembly (See Lourie to Eban, Tel. 566, 21 September 1956, 130.09/2332/1). Later on Eban cabled that the issue was not put to the vote (Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel.WIA716, 21 September 1956, 93.01/2213/3).

429. M . Comay (Ottawa) to G. Meir. 20 September 1956

Coded Tel. 289; Inc.: 130/02/2456/9

Comay reports that Canada has decided positively to supply 24 planes to Israel. The announcement will be made public tomorrow or the following day.[1] They had asked for a letter stating that the planes would be used for defensive purposes only. Comay had given such a letter. The decision was to supply them at a rate of four planes per month. Comay said that this was not what had been promised in the past and approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Canadians responded that they would announce what the rate would be in a day or two. Comay suggests sending letters of thanks to the Canadian prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs.[6]

Notes

1. The statement was issued on 21 September. It said among other things that after consulting with friendly states and after the defensive nature of Israel's request had been explained, it had been decided to sell it 24 F-86 planes. This permission could be cancelled or delayed if the political or military circumstances in the Middle East changed. After the start of the Sinai Campaign, Canada took advantage of this clause in the agreement to suspend the deal.
2. The Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pearson was in Paris at that time for the NATO Council conference.
3. In this telegram (dated 12 September 1956, in File 130.09/2287/3) it said that in consultations between the parties concerned, the rate and dates of delivery of the planes was approved once again, as detailed in Comay's previous telegram of 7 August, namely, 11 planes in November, 8 in December, 3 in January, 2 in February.
4. In a letter to Comay dated 4 October, Pearson announced that the planes would be delivered to Israel within six months, at a rate of four per month. Pearson reiterated the reservation mentioned in note 1 above, namely that the deal could be cancelled or delayed if the political or military circumstances in the Middle East changed (The letter in File 93.08/391/2)
5. In File 93.01/2287/3. In this telegram Comay suggested sending messages of gratitude from Ben-Gurion to the Canadian prime minister and from the minister of foreign affairs to the Canadian minister of foreign affairs. He also announced that he would explore the possibilities of training Israeli pilots in the Canadian aircraft plant

and also the possibility of appealing to a number of wealthy Canadian Jews to finance the deal.

6. See letter of thanks from Ben-Gurion to the Canadian prime minister dated 4 October, in the Ben-Gurion Archives.

430. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 21 September 1956

Coded Tel. 354; Outg.: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

The division instructs the embassy to respond to the Soviet statement of 16 September. This statement totally ignored the existence of Israel and its interest in the freedom of navigation. The embassy is asked to prepare a memorandum and to present it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while giving verbal explanations if required. In the memorandum regret should be expressed over the ignoring of Israel and amazement over the proposal to invite Arab states "bordering on the Suez region" without mentioning Israel, the closest of all. They should conclude with the sentence that "Israel believes that no solution of the Suez problem which fails to take into account the just and legitimate interests of Israel will bring that calm and peace to the region which it and the whole world need and will therefore miss its aim."[4]

Notes

1. In these telegrams (16 September, in File 130.09/2326/8) there is a statement about a Note from the Soviet Government to the states of the world, including Israel, containing the Soviet Union's view of the Suez crisis as presented at the London Conference, opposition to the military preparations of Britain and France and opposition to the establishment of the Canal Users' Association. On the other hand the Soviet Union agrees to participate in the conference proposed by Egypt, and in its opinion all the states signatories to the 1888 Convention should participate, including the legitimate heirs of the Ottoman Empire, the Arab states bordering on the Canal region and also other countries using the Canal.
2. No. 373.
3. See No. 384, n. 4.
4. In the embassy's reply it said that, to be precise, Zahkarov had been handed a Note and not a memorandum, and asked whether the intention was this time to present a memorandum (See the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 531, 23 September 1956, 130.09/2320/7). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied

(Telegram to the embassy, No. 358, 26 September 1956, 130.09/2326/6) that it was better to present a Note, but it would be preferable to wait until the response to the Zorin statement (See No. 434) was decided upon.
For Israel's reply to the statement – No. 452.

431. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) and J. Tsur (Paris). 22 September 1956

Coded Tel. 635; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on the second London conference. At the conference differences of opinion emerged after the failure of the Menzies mission. The reduction in tension was also the result of the hesitant attitude of the United States (as evinced by the Eisenhower and Dulles statements),[1] the position of the Scandinavian states, which had decided to transfer the issue to the U.N., and the debate in the British Parliament.[2] The French were especially disappointed, and they were particularly incensed over the change of wording in one of the regulation articles which made it possible to pay transit dues not to the Association alone but to Egypt as well.[3] From reliable sources he had heard that the British and French governments were afraid that Nasser would exploit the differences of opinion among the participants and would conduct negotiations on the basis of the regulations of the Canal Users' Association in order to achieve his aims legally. For Israel the important articles were those dealing with membership of the Association (enabling other states, in addition to the 18 founders, to join), and Article 2 (3) which refers to the operation of the Canal and enables states which are not members of the Association to use the Canal. Israel's position must be explained in Washington, Paris and London, and Elath would therefore request a meeting with Lloyd[6] and was expecting instructions.[7]

Notes

1. See No. 415, n.1.
2. See No. 414, n.1.
3. This article of the regulations, which sets out the aims of the Canal Users' Association, states that one of its aims is:
   "To receive, hold and disburse the revenues accruing from dues and other sums which any user of the Canal may pay to S.C.U.A without prejudice to existing rights pending final settlement."
   The full text of the regulations see *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1955-1956*, p. 15125.

4. See No. 424.
5. The third conference convened in London at the beginning of October and decided on the establishment of the institutions of the Suez Canal Users' Association – See No. 459.
6. See No. 447.
7. See No. 443.

432. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 24 September 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 87; Outg.: 130.09/2339/7

Summary

Tekoah reports a conversation of the minister of foreign affairs with Burns after the incident at Ramat Rachel.[1] The minister told Burns that the U.N. must inform the government of Jordan unequivocally that the mental state of its soldiers was its internal affair and the U.N. would judge it according to the actions of its soldiers and citizens. She would also like to see the secretary-general himself adopt a public position after such an incident, on his own initiative, especially after he had threatened to take measures on more minor issues. She added that Israel was interested in seeing if the king of Jordan would issue a statement that his country was interested in quiet on the border. If such a statement was not issued, no trust whatsoever could be placed in the remarks made by the Jordanian rulers to Burns about their ostensible desire to prevent incidents. Burns said that he would report to the secretary-general on the conversation.

Notes

1. On 23 September the Jordanian Army opened machine gun fire from its positions in northern Bethlehem on participants in a conference of the Israel Exploration Society which took place in Ramat Rachel. Four of the participants were killed and 15 wounded. The Jordanians claimed that the shots were the work of a crazed soldier (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel missions abroad, Circular 81, 24 September 1956, 130.02/2440/11).
2. See No. 420 and n. 1 there.
3. At a meeting on 25 September with the secretary-general Kidron asked him to issue a statement condemning the Jordanian aggression, as he had done in the past in cases where Israel was condemned for its actions. The secretary-general replied that the incidents of the past few days could not be compared with Israel's actions in

Gharandal and Khirbet ar Rahwa, and moreover he still had not received a full report from Burns (See Kidron to Rafael, Tel. 603, 25 September 1956, 130.02/2453/8).

433. M. Kidron (New York) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 24 September 1956

Coded Tel. NWT163; Inc.: 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Kidron reports on the British and French decision to place the question of Suez on the agenda of the Security Council.[1] This step came as a surprise, and, according to the British, the intention was to preempt a Soviet step. Others, including the Americans, believe that the aim was to prove that the U.N. was helpless and thus to prepare the ground for other steps. The Israeli delegation had been asked if it would request the right to speak. The reply was that it had not yet received instructions, but it could be assumed that the answer would be affirmative. The British were urging Israel[2] to show restraint, because its appearance would not bolster the case against Egypt. Kidron suggests that, since the Egyptians had lodged a complaint of their own,[3] Israel should also lodge a complaint.[4]

Notes

1. On 23 September Britain and France submitted a request to the Security Council to discuss the situation that had arisen through the unilateral act of the Egyptian government which had put an end to the international operation of the Suez Canal, which was approved by means of the 1888 Convention.
   At a meeting held on 5 October between the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain and France, British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd said that the decision to appeal to the Security Council had been adopted after secret information was received that the Russians were considering the possibility of bringing the issue before the U.N., and Britain could not allow the Soviets to preempt it (See *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 300, pp. 640–641).
2. See Elath's conversation with Lloyd, No. 447. Prior to this conversation the British chargé d'affaires had met for a conversation with Shneerson, the director of the British Commonwealth Division, and asked that Israel not insist on participation in the Council debates. He explained that Britain's aim was to keep the debate in the Council as brief as possible; in any case the Soviets would prevent any resolution that was not in line with Egypt's wishes, and the main purpose of the meeting was to prove to public opinion in Britain and the world that the United Nations was not an efficient instrument to deal with the problem (See telegram of the British

Commonwealth Division to the Israel missions abroad, Circular No. 98, 26 September 1956, 130.09/2377/4).

3. On 24 September Egypt lodged a complaint to the Security Council against Britain and France accusing them of taking steps against it and creating "a danger to peace and international security." This complaint was registered together with the Franco-British complaint on the Security Council agenda.

4 In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was decided, at the initiative of the minister, that they must request Israel's participation in the Security Council sessions as "an interested party" – See No. 435.

434. A. Chelouche (Moscow) to the East European Division. 24 September 1956

Coded Tel. 535; Inc.: 130.09/2326/8

Summary

Chelouche reports that he was summoned to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Zorin, who gave him a statement according to which incidents along the border between Israel and the Arab states had increased in number recently, and Israeli forces had penetrated into Jordanian and Egyptian territory and inflicted losses. In addition, an announcement had appeared in the Israeli press from the French ambassador in Israel according to which Israel would fight on the side of the West against Egypt. This announcement had not been denied.[1] All of this had led to heightened tension in the Middle East.

Chelouche replied that he would convey the content of the statement to his government. As for the French ambassador's statement, it only obligated the ambassador himself. In addition, he reviewed the violations of the ceasefire on the borders and pointed out that Israel would not tolerate gross provocation against the security of its citizens. He noted that he was permitting himself to ask whether, as he hoped, if the Soviet Union was indeed interested in peace in the Middle East, a similar statement to that conveyed to Israel had also been conveyed to the Arab states.

Zorin replied that he did not wish to enter into the question of relations between Israel and the Arab states which was a matter for the states concerned. The Soviet Union was interested in peace in the region and opposed military action by any of the parties. As for the actions of the Soviet Union towards the Arab states, they were its sole responsibility and he could not answer the question. He believed that if they wished to ensure security in the region, then Chelouche's answer that, if the Arab states continued to act as they usually did, Israel would react, did not help to bring the goal

closer. He asked the Israeli government to study the content of the statement with due consideration.[3]

Notes

1. The source of the report was the French weekly *L'Express* which in its edition of 8 September wrote that Gilbert, who at that time was in Paris, said that if Britain and France sent army units to Egypt Israel would join in the war (*Ha'aretz*, 9 September 1956).
2. In a speech at the opening of the Mapai Conference on 27 August Ben-Gurion said among other things: "We are duty-bound to do our utmost to preserve the peace as far as we are able, and all the rash suggestions to launch a preventive war are sinful and cause others to sin. A war that is not forced upon us by others will not solve any question of ours, even if it ends in victory, since there are great forces outside the Arab world who are liable in such an event to be arrayed against us with their military might [...] and therefore the prime foundation of our policy is to preserve the peace, even a shaky peace, to the extent that this depends on us [...]" (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel missions abroad, Unclassified Circular 6, 27 August 1956, 130.09/2377/4).
3. Israel's reply – see No. 455 and n. 2 there.

435. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to A. Eban and M. Kidron (Washington). 25 September 1956

Coded Tel. TNW508; Outg.:130.09/2312/9

Summary

Rafael reports that in consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs it was decided to ask for Israel's participation in the Security Council sessions as an interested party.[1] They must avoid the impression of direct participation in the Anglo-French initiative and concentrate on the issue of freedom of navigation without reference to the question of nationalisation. Therefore Eban should delay his remarks until many speakers had expressed support for freedom of navigation, and it was preferable to speak after the speech of the Egyptian representative, who would surely stress Egypt's readiness to guarantee freedom of navigation.

Notes

1. See No. 413.
2. In this telegram (dated 9 September, in File 93.01/2213/3) Eban recommended that Israel participate in the Security Council debates on Suez, and concluded: "We must

participate in order to raise the problem of the 1951 resolution and then to exercise restraint, namely not to be drawn into an argument over the rest of the problems."

3. See No. 381 and n. 4 there.
4. In this telegram (dated 24 September, 130.09/2331/11) Eban asked if he should request Israel's participation in the Security Council debates on the Suez issue, and suggested a number of possible dates for making the request (Option No.1 meaning an immediate request). Israel's official request to participate in the debates was submitted on 4 October. On the debates, which opened on 5 October, see No. 474.

436. Editorial Note

The I.D.F. Operation at Husan

Early on 26 September 1956 I.D.F. soldiers attacked a number of Jordanian Army positions in the village of Husan southwest of Bethlehem and the local police station. This was a raid in reprisal for the Jordanian attack on the participants in the conference of the Israel Exploration Society at Ramat Rachel as well as for the murder of an Israeli woman near Moshav Aminadav, and the murder of a tractor driver from Kibbutz Ma'oz Hayyim. The Jordanian losses were 51 killed and for Israel, 11 killed. This severe outcome aroused harsh reactions abroad. On 26 September Eban was summoned to Hammarskjöld who said that the raid presented a challenge to the Security Council and the Council must deal with it. Sharp reactions were published in various countries and there were also exchanges of words between the British Foreign Office and the Israeli embassy in London (See a collection of documents, "Reactions to the Husan Raid," undated, 130.02/2453/8; telegram from the embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 September 1956, ibid.).

437. M. Kidron (New York) to G. Rafael. 26 September 1956

Coded Tel. X308; Outg. 130.02/2453/8

Summary

Kidron reports on Eban's meeting with Hammarskjöld in which the situation on the Jordanian border was discussed. Eban argued along the same lines as the telegram sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs[1] (even though he had not yet received it). Hammarskjöld replied that he did not wish to go into details of the latest incident,[2] but said that the line being adopted by Israel posed a challenge for the Security Council. At the same time he intended

to report to the Council, both about the Jordanian incident and about the situation on the Egyptian border.[3] If the governments concerned did not put an end to the situation, he would suggest that the Council take the matter into its own hands. Kidron, who was present at the conversation, asked why Hammarskjöld was combining the Jordanian issue with the Egyptian, since there was no connection between them. Hammarskjöld stuck to his position, and there was a heated exchange.

Notes

1. In this telegram (Rafael to Eban, Tel. 589, 27 September 1956, 130.02/2448/5) Rafael instructed him: 1. To give Hammarskjöld the text of Meir's statement to Burns (See No. 444); 2. To try and persuade him to deal personally with the situation and not to approach the Security Council; 3. To inform him that Israel would observe the ceasefire if he succeeded in receiving a commitment from Jordan to observe an absolute ceasefire; 4. To point out that Israel did not wish to be dragged into a war with the Arab states, but so long as they conducted a campaign of disruption, Israel had no alternative but to adopt measures to stop the "wave of bloodshed"; 5. To ask him to act in line with Meir's statement to Burns on 24 September (See No. 432).
2. The Husan raid – See No. 436 (Editorial Note).
3. See No. 445, n. 3.
4. See U.N. Document X3658 of 26 September 1956.
5. See Nos. 438 and 439.

438. D. Ben-Gurion to D. Hammarsjköld (New York). 26 September 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/6

Notes

1. No. 417.
2. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
3. These remarks were made in a statement which Hammarskjöld issued on 17 August, after two Israeli reprisal raids in the Gaza Strip. The text is as follows:
   "This, apart from all legal considerations, is the uncontradictable thought behind the repeated condemnations by the United Nations of acts of violence, understood to have been in retaliation, and the view that such acts cannot be considered as acts of self-defence in the sense of the U.N. Charter" (See Statement of the U.N. Press Department from 17 August in File 93.03/3042/3).
4. Hammarskjöld gave a brief interim reply to Ben-Gurion (See below, No. 439) and afterwards a detailed reply whose main thrust was that in the exchanges of letters between them each of them remained true to his views. He considered Ben-Gurion's letter to be the final word at this stage. He would be unable to visit Israel because he

was so busy dealing with the Suez Canal crisis (See Hammarskjöld to Ben-Gurion, 3 October 1956, 130.02/2404/6).

439. D. Hammarskjöld [New York] to D. Ben-Gurion. 26 September 1956

Copy: 93.03/3042/3

Notes

1. No. 438.
2. See ibid., n. 4.

440. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Minister in Warsaw. 26 September 1956

Coded Tel. 606; Outg.: 130.11/2502/13

Summary

Eshel reports that during a trip to the Lachish area the Polish chargé d'affaires[1] complained that the reports about immigration from Poland were harming the immigration. Eshel replied that steps were already being taken to restrain the reports. He informed the legation in Warsaw[2] that in addition to the meetings that had already been held with newspaper editors he intended to summon all the editors for a meeting with him and Harman.

Notes

1. Jan Slowikowski, the chargé d'affaires at the Polish legation in Israel.
2. Katriel Katz was appointed as Israeli minister in Warsaw after three years during which Israel was represented in Poland by a permanent chargé d'affaires. He presented his credentials on 24 September.

441. G. Meir (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 26 September 1956

Coded Tel. IWA 464; Outg.: 130.09/2311/9

Summary

The minister draws Eban's attention to the problem of immigration of Moroccan Jewry: 50,000 Jews were waiting to leave and Easterman had gone to Rabat in order to conduct negotiations. The chances of his mission were unclear[1] and it was up to Israel to exert pressure using public opinion and the Jewish organisations. She instructs him to act without delay and mentions Sam Rosenman, Gay Lovestone and the Conference of Presidents.[2]

Notes

1. At the same time as Easterman was conducting negotiations with the Moroccan authorities it was decided in Israel to promote the immigration of Moroccan Jewry through the Mossad (the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations) and the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency. The agreement between these bodies was signed in September 1956 (See I. Harel, *Security and Democracy*, pp. 304-305 [Hebrew]).
2. Apparently a mistake in the original, and the reference is to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. For further developments on this topic see No. 461.

442. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to G. Meir. 27 September 1956

Original: Ben-Gurion Archives

Below is a translation of the full text of the document:

Dear Golda,

I wish to put down on paper the agreed instructions, although I am not sure that I remember all that our colleagues said in the joint consultation,[1] with a general consensus.

a) We will not go into action alone.

b) We will not participate in the operation unless Britain agrees to our inclusion, and it guarantees that Jordan and Iraq will not open a second front against us, or agrees in advance that in the event that we are attacked

by Jordan or Iraq or both – we shall counter-attack, without England intervening and without English resentment against us.

c) We are prepared to promise the British that we will not touch Jordan if it does not intervene.

d) We consider it necessary for the operation to be carried out with the knowledge of the United States. We do not see the need for its participation. On the contrary, it is desirable that it should not act, but vital that we should not suffer in the United States on account of our participation (withholding of the loan, of the UJA fundraising campaign, food shipments etc.)

e) We have to make clear to our friends the difference between our situation and theirs in the event of failure, for them it is a political or a military failure, which does not affect their country but only their prestige. For us failure may mean destruction.

f) The chief of staff will clarify our military limitations in the air, at sea and in armour, and in these areas our friends will have to act with greater force.

g) The conquest of Jordan by another state (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt) in the course of the "joint operation" gives us freedom of action in all areas west of the Jordan now occupied by the Jordanian government (a qualification to paragraph c).

h) In the event of success we shall demand Israeli control **in practice** over the Straits of Tiran shore, to guarantee freedom of navigation from Eilat to the Red Sea and from the Red Sea to Eilat.

i) In such an event we will also suggest demilitarization of the entire Sinai Peninsula (except for the Israeli command positions on the shore of the Straits).

j) We shall propose that the new government to be set up in Egypt will be required to enter into negotiations with us and to sign a peace treaty. In any event, we shall demand a guarantee of freedom of navigation for Israel in Suez – if the Canal is not destroyed in the meantime.

k) You will head the delegation and the members will not make any proposals without your prior permission.

l) No one but the chief of staff will discuss military matters.

m) The delegation will be authorised to express its positive opinion if the conditions and proposals appear to be acceptable, but the **final and binding** decision will be made only after the delegation returns, as soon as possible in accordance with the demand of our friends.[2]

D.B.G.

Perhaps it is also worth clarifying what will happen in the event – although this seems to me to be very far from certain – that Russia attacks us.

The conversation should begin, in my opinion, with a positive formulation, with our desire to participate, and generally with our readiness to cooperate

with France in all areas, and gratitude for its assistance from the days of the War of Independence until today, but without too much *rabolepstvo* [Russian: flattery].

Notes

1. In the framework of the contacts between the French and the Israeli defence establishments, according to the agreement reached in June (See No. 316, n. 1), Peres visited Paris between 18-22 September, at the height of the Suez crisis. At his meeting with Minister of Defence Bourgès-Maunoury, the latter told him that his government was prepared to act against Nasser, with the knowledge and agreement of the British. The French wanted Israel's cooperation, and this too with British consent. He added that the British had made their agreement conditional on Israel not attacking Jordan. Bourgès-Maunoury asked for an Israeli delegation to come to France, headed by a minister, in order to discuss cooperation "on the basis of equality" (See Ben-Gurion's diary, 25 September 1956). On his return to Israel Peres reported on his conversation to Ben-Gurion, who raised the subject for debate at a meeting with a group of ministers on 25 September. It was agreed that a delegation would be dispatched to France composed of the following members:Foreign Minister Golda Meir (chairman), Minister of Transport Carmel, Chief of Staff Dayan and the director-general of the Ministry of Defence, Peres.
   The document above gives the instructions which Ben-Gurion issued to Meir prior to the delegation's departure. The talks with the French took place on 30 September and 1 October (For details of the discussions which were held in Saint Germain near Paris see: M. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 233-240 [Hebrew]; M. Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 195-199).
2. Following the Paris talks, at the beginning of October a French delegation arrived in Israel to continue the talks – See No. 456.

443. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 28 September 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 107; Outg.: 130.02/2409/8

Summary

Rafael conveys to the Israeli missions instructions for action to bring about Israel's invitation to the Security Council debate on the Suez Canal issue. The representatives are asked to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the highest level and to ask for support for Israel's request to take part in the debate. If possible they should also garner support in the press.

Notes

1. See No. 447.
2. In the instructions to Moscow (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Moscow, Tel. 367, 28 September 1956, 130.11/2506/7) and to Belgrade (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the legation in Belgrade, Tel. 317, 29 September 1956, 130.09/2298/9) part of paragraph 5 was omitted. In the telegram to Belgrade the following sentence was added: "Of course you will explain that now is the opportunity for Yugoslavia to prove the sincerity of its statements [...] not to sacrifice on the altar of its friendship with Egypt that which also in its view constitutes the unquestionable right of Israel, namely freedom of navigation."
3. For this affair see Vol. 1, No. 284.

444. Editorial Note

Message Delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Burns Concerning the Operation at Husan

On 28 September 1956 the Minister of Foreign Affairs summoned the chief of staff of the U.N. Observer Force, General Burns, and handed him the following statement:

The action carried out yesterday [the reprisal raid at Husan] was the unavoidable result of a series of murders and attacks carried out by the Jordanian forces against Israeli citizens in Israeli territory in violation of the explicit commitments made by Jordan to the secretary-general of the U.N. to observe the ceasefire permanently and unconditionally.

The condemnations of the Armistice Commission and the appeal of the secretary-general have not proved effective and did not impel Jordan to put an end to these attacks which continued to take a toll of the lives of Israeli citizens along the entire length of the Israel-Jordan border.

Israel's decision to ensure the preservation of peace along its border remains unaltered.

Israel regrets the loss of life on both sides – however the responsibility rests with Jordan.

Israel has never initiated acts of hostility and will not do so in the future. The Israeli Government reiterates its promise made to the secretary-general scrupulously to observe the ceasefire on a basis of reciprocity and it requests the secretary-general and the commander of the U.N. Observer Force to take the necessary steps to ensure that Jordan obeys the principle of the ceasefire. The restoration of a true ceasefire represents a fundamental guarantee for the restoration of peaceful conditions in the region. Israel will willingly cooperate to this end.

445. M. Kidron (New York) to Y. Tekoah. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel. X619; Inc.: 130.02/2448/5

Summary

Kidron reports a conversation with the secretary-general in which they discussed the secretary's report to the Security Council. Kidron put forward arguments on the basis of a telegram he had received from Jerusalem and stressed that Israel was strongly opposed to the publication of the report on the situation on the border with Egypt. The secretary said that he had made a genuine effort to present the position of Israel as he understood it. He referred to Ben-Gurion's criticism of Burns' Annexe,[2] and said that it contained things said by Israel on the record as Israel's official position. Kidron replied that the Burns Annexe was the most negative document from Israel's point of view which the U. N. had issued in the past five years. The document failed completely to take the background situation into account and bore no relation to reality. Kidron contradicted the statements expressed in the Annexe. He pointed out that it was surely clear to Hammarskjöld that issuing the report and the Annexe would make it impossible for Israel to accept any of his proposals.

Notes

1. In this telegram (to Eban and Kidron, 28 September 1956, 130.09/2332/1) Tekoah reports that he has received information about Hammarskjöld's intention to present a report to the Security Council which will include among other things details of his talks with the Israeli leaders with regard to easing the tension on the borders. Tekoah instructed them to tell the secretary on behalf of the government that Israel was vigorously opposed to making public secret talks without its approval and that the secretary was disregarding the deterioration of the situation on the Suez Canal following the affair of the *Panagia* vessel, the problem of the prisoners and the fact that his proposals which had been endorsed by the Security Council had been rejected by Egypt.
   The secretary-general's report (S/3654, dated 12 September 1956) was published on 28 September. A copy of the text sent by telegram is in File 130.02/2404/6.
2. Two appendices written by Burns were attached to the Hammarsjköld report. In the first appendix, dated 5 September, the situation in the Gaza Strip and in Nitzana was described. It said that the presence of the I.D.F. in Nitzana was continuing and that Israel was expanding settlement in this area. In addition. Israel was continuing to restrict the movement and presence of the U.N. observers in this area and was refusing to hold the meetings of the Mixed Israel-Egypt Armistice Commission there, saying that no Egyptian would enter this region. In the second appendix, dated 26 September, he reviewed the incidents on the Israel-Jordan border in the period

between 29 July and 25 September, and the complaints lodged by Israel and Jordan to the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission.
3. A few words are missing in the original.
4. See No. 342, n. 9.
5. The letter is in File 130.02/2404/6 and includes Tekoah's reaction to the publication of the Burns report: making public secret talks, without the consent of the government with which the U.N. conducted the negotiations, will seriously affect contact between Israeli representatives and those of the U.N.

446. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Meir and J. Herzog. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel.WIA753; Outg.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with Dulles which took place on the occasion of Eban's forthcoming trip to Israel.

Eban began with Suez and protested at the British efforts to prevent Israel's participation in the Security Council debate.[2] Dulles replied that it was both desirable and natural that Israel participate, but the widening of the debate and increasing the number of debaters had to be avoided. He suggested that Israel confine its appearance to the issue of freedom of passage and not be present during the debates on other issues so as not to encourage demands by other states, such as the Arab states, India and Ceylon, etc., which would also demand to appear.

Eban then broached the matter of arms and expressed gratitude for the secretary's personal efforts to complete the Canadian transaction. Dulles replied that the transaction opened up new vistas for Israel since these planes existed in great abundance and thus there was the possibility of training pilots and obtaining major reinforcements in time of need.

Eban raised the question of the loan and the pipeline. Dulles replied after studying the documents. According to him the Bank was worried by the size of Israel's debt. He promised to approach the Bank again. Regarding the pipeline he said that he would be happy to receive the Israeli memorandum on the issue[8] and that he knew that France was also interested in the project.[9]

Notes

1. See No. 433.
2. See ibid., n. 2.

3. Dulles and Eisenhower held two press conferences concerning the Suez Canal, the first on 26 September, the second the following day. Among other things Dulles said that Israel, whether or not it was a member of the Canal Users' Association, would have rights of passage for vessels and cargoes as if it was a member of the Association. Eisenhower was asked about the blockade which Egypt had imposed on Israel for seven years, and replied that this was "a black stain" which it had had for a long time; he thought that it was unjustified and not in keeping with the Constantinople Convention of 1888 (See open telegram from the embassy in Washington to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 September 1956, 130.02/2450/3)
4. See No. 178, n. 10.
5. Since the dismissal of the commander of the Jordanian Army, John B. Glubb.
6. A report of such a meeting was not found and it is not clear whether it was held. Later Eban reported that he had learned that following this conversation Dulles had had arguments with the Bank. It was finally decided that although the Bank was not prepared at this juncture to commit itself for the whole amount which Israel had requested, it was prepared nonetheless at the secretary's urging to approve an important part of the request. In ten days time a delegation from the Bank would leave for Israel and an official statement to this effect would be issued next week in Washington (See Eban to Herzog, XA651, 5 October 1956, 93.01/2219/10.; G. Palmer to Eban, 9 October 1956, 130.20/2486/5).
7. The original has "in the Canal," but Eban meant the Straits of Tiran, as stated in the American report on the conversation (See *FRUS 1955–1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 281).
8. The memorandum, undated, is in File 130.02/2456/6.
9. See also No. 451.

447. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel. 666; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath reports on a conversation with Lloyd. Elath opened with the question of Israel joining the Canal Users' Association, and explained the importance of the Canal and freedom of navigation in it for Israel. Lloyd replied that he could not promise anything on the issue. Afterwards Elath raised the question of the Security Council debates and Britain's opposition to Israel's participation. Lloyd replied that on this matter too he could not promise anything, since if Israel demanded to appear, the Arab states would also demand to participate and this was undesirable. Elath pointed out that he was disappointed by the replies. They were in line with the general British approach, which was unfriendly to Israel and was in fact intended to placate some of the Arab states in the region at Israel's expense. Added to this were their lack of response to the arms requests, the venomous propaganda from

the Cyprus radio station,[2] and the wholesale condemnations of Israel after each reprisal raid. Lloyd replied that this assessment of their policy towards Israel was "completely unjustified." It was true that they were trying to split the Arab world, but in this they were being useful to Israel. They had sold arms to Israel to the best of their ability, and had also assisted by not opposing the arms deals with France and Canada. Regarding the reprisal raids Britain was "completely at odds" with Israel on this issue. At the conclusion of the conversation Lloyd asked Israel not to hasten to judge the British unfavourably until the whole affair, whose aim was to "clip Nasser's wings," was over.

Notes

1. See No. 431 and n. 5 there.
2. The British set up a broadcasting station to the Arab world in Cyprus called the "Near East Arab Broadcasting Service." The tone of the broadcasts was hostile to Israel; see, for example, details in a telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in London, No.190. 12 September 1956, 130.09/2321/3.
3. See No. 414, n. 1.

448. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel. 629; Inc. 130.02/2450/3

Summary

Tsur reports a conversation with Mollet. He found him more confident of the West's victory. In his view, Nasser's fate was sealed. The only fear was that American hesitancy would leave him time to gather strength; it was known that each week brought Soviet ships and additional tanks to Egypt. When Tsur asked in what way they were intending to carry on the campaign, he said that he could not give a definite answer, but after the talks held in Paris[1] he was certain that they would not stop it. The talks with the British were fruitful and areas of disagreement had been settled. He had talked with Gaitskell but the latter was sticking to his opinion, from internal considerations. Tsur told Mollet about the British attitude towards Israel. He was surprised and angry. He said that France's position was unchanged, and it saw Israel as a factor of prime importance in the struggle in the Middle East. Regarding the oil, he said that his government was now examining various oil pipeline projects.

Notes

1. In September 1956 a conference of the NATO Council took place in Paris, during which the representatives of the Western states were able to exchange views regarding the Suez Canal.
2. Maurice Lemaire, the junior minister for industry in the French Government.

449. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel. 368; Outg.: 130/11/2507/4

Summary

The division reports on a conversation of Meir with Soviet Ambassador Abramov concerning the latest Soviet letter.[1] The minister said that Abramov, who was in Israel, knew very well to what extent the text of the letter was untenable and ignored the reality prevailing along the borders. She reiterated Israel's aspiration for peace and its belief that the Soviet Union, the friend of the Arabs, could influence them. Abramov replied that the Soviet Union's point of view was known and he had nothing to add to the letter. He criticised the reprisal raids and said that they led to Arab reaction. The minister also raised the question of the Suez Canal and stressed that Israel was interested only in freedom of navigation for its ships. Abramov replied that it was impossible to separate this question from the overall question of relations between the Arab states and Israel. At the end of the conversation the minister said that a Note had already been sent regarding the issue of Russian property[7] in Israel. The ambassador expressed satisfaction with this step.

Notes

1. See No. 434.
2. In a report published on 21 September in *Izvestya* under the headline "Provocative Preparations in Israel" it said that following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal the "ruling circles in Israel" were conducting a policy of military provocation against Egypt and the other Arab states (See the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 527, 22 September 1956, 130.02/2457/15).
3. On 3 September six I.D.F. soldiers were killed and three wounded by shots from a Jordanian ambush in the vicinity of Bet Guvrin.
4. On 16 August a bus and escorting military jeep were attacked north of Eilat by a force called the "Jordanian Desert Commando" (under Egyptian guidance). One passenger and three soldiers were killed and nine wounded. On the same day a civilian vehicle

ran over a mine in the vicinity of Sde Boker, and five of the passengers were injured. Israel reacted to these incidents on 17 August. An I.D.F. force attacked an Egyptian position near Deir al Balah and three Egyptian soldiers were killed. An I.D.F. ambush near Rafah attacked an Egyptian jeep and killed six Egyptian soldiers.

5. The operation took place in fact on 17 August – see n. 4 above.
6. In a speech to the Kibbutz Hameuhad Council on 30 June Allon said among other things that Israel had to reserve to itself the moral right to strike at the enemy if this was necessary for its existence (See *Ha'aretz*, 1 July 1956).
7. See No. 399 and n. 2 there.

450. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 28 September 1956

Coded Tel. 366; Outg. 130.09/2326/6

Summary

The division instructs the ambassador to meet with the first deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or with Zorin and to hand him Israel's answer to the latest Soviet letter,[2] as follows: 1. a protest that the Soviet Union ignored the incidents carried out by the Arab states; 2. a statement that the remarks of the French ambassador in Israel were made purely on his own initiative; 3. an announcement that the Soviet reliance on the Israeli press was one-sided and ignored the statements by the prime minister about Israel's aspirations to keep the peace; 4. a statement that full responsibility for the tense situation on the border should be placed on the Arab states. In conclusion it must be pointed out that Israel believes that the Soviet Union can make an important contribution to peace in the region if it exerts its influence on the Arab states to cease their provocations.[3]

Notes

1. Avidar cabled that the Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov would return from his vacation only in the second half of October. He was not interested in another meeting with Semyonov before leaving for Israel (See his telegram No. 542, 27 September 1956, 130.09/2326/8).
2. See No. 434.
3. See Nos. 452, 455.

451. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 30 September 1956

Coded Tel. WIA755; 93.01/2213/11

Summary

Following his conversation with Dulles, Eban points out that the issue of the planes as raised in the conversation was important.[1] For the first time Israel has been told officially that there was an intention and plan to promise it an addition of force in the event it was attacked. If there was such a plan for the air it could be assumed that a similar plan also existed for the sea and land. His conclusion, based on hints and scraps of information, was that the National Security Council had, with the president's approval, adopted the principle of assistance for Israel if it was attacked. This meant that although the Americans had rejected the idea of a security pact in formal external terms, they had accepted it from the standpoint of its essential content. Eban concludes from this that they should carry out a serious review of the significance of the slogan of Israel's resistance to aggression and of Israel-United States relations, without neglecting action to bolster the military and economic situation of the state.

Notes

1. See No. 446.

452. Israel Embassy in Moscow to the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1 October 1956

Minute; 93.39/546/8

Summary

The embassy confirms receipt of the Soviet government statement of 16 September concerning the Suez problem.[1] This statement, like its predecessor,[2] totally ignores the existence of the State of Israel in the region and its interest in freedom of passage through the Canal. Israel believes that any solution to the problem of the Suez Canal which does not take into account the legitimate and just interests of Israel will not lead to an easing of tension and the enhancement of peace. The Israel government expresses

the hope that the Soviet government will actively support assuring the safe passage of Israeli and other ships bearing cargoes to and from Israel through the Canal.

Notes

1. See No. 430.
2. See No. 376.
3. See No. 373.
4. See No. 394 and n. 4 there.
5. Ambassador Avidar gave this minute to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Zorin at their meeting on 1 October – See No. 455.

453. United States Division to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 2 October 1956

Coded Tel. 487; Outg.: 130.09/2311/10

Summary

The division reports that, at his request, Lawson was received by the prime minister for an urgent conversation. He read out the text of a document from the State Department. He began with the situation in Jordan. He said that he understood the problem facing the Israeli government which had to defend its citizens. The United States had the impression that Hussein was making serious efforts to control the situation, although to date unsuccessfully. The United States believes that Hammarskjöld and the United Nations are entitled to cooperation by all the parties. The principal motive for Hussein's appeal to the other Arab states was Israel's reprisal raids. The main question was what would Iraq do; it was possible that it would dispatch a symbolic force to Jordan, which would be stationed in the vicinity of Amman and its function would be limited to stabilising the internal situation. He wished to know Israel's attitude to this step.

Ben-Gurion replied that as long as Jordan continued to exist Israel would not lift a finger against it. If Jordan were to disappear – it would be possible to discuss this at the appropriate time. If Iraq sent an army to the eastern part of Jordan, Israel would not act, but if the army approached Israel's borders, Israel would have to reconsider its position. Afterwards Ben-Gurion reiterated his stated opposition to a preventive war[2] and stressed the need for peace.

The division instructs the embassy staff to await another telegram[4] before taking action.

Notes

1. See No. 434, n. 2.
2. During the debate on the state budget in the Knesset on 29 February 1956 Ben-Gurion said among other things: "I am sure of the outcome of victory. But I am not afraid to say that if we have the choice, victory or peace – I choose peace" (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), First Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XX, p. 1239).
3. This telegram was not found.
4. No. 454.

454. United States Division to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 2 October 1956

Coded Tel. 489; Outg.: 130.02/2403/10

Summary

The division reports further on the conversation between Lawson and Ben-Gurion. This conversation perhaps heralds the beginning of a shake-up in the region in anticipation of an attempt by Britain and the United States to ensure Iraqi control of Jordan. The prime minister's reply was general and Eban and Shiloah must meet with high State Department officials and explain Israel's position in detail:

1. The prime minister estimates that an overall plan is being worked out regarding Jordan. He asks that Israel should be made privy to it and its interests be taken into account.

2. For the moment, on the basis of Lawson's appeal, it should be explained that the prime minister's reply referred to the temporary entry of a symbolic force, unarmed with heavy weapons, which would not approach Israel's borders and under no circumstances would cross the Jordan.

3. Israel was concerned about the rumours of an intention to unite Iraq with Jordan and to grant independence to the West Bank. Any such development would create a new situation that would threaten Israel.[3]

Notes

1. No. 453.
2. See No. 497, n. 1.
3. Eban and Shiloah met with Rountree, clarified the prime minister's position according to the above telegram and demanded the requested assurances. Rountree replied that Lawson had received instructions to meet with the prime minister again and answers would then be conveyed which would reassure Israel. They also raised the subject of the rumours concerning the plan to unite Iraq with Jordan and the establishment

of an Arab state on the West Bank. Rountree ignored the question of unification and replied only that an Arab state on the West Bank would not be viable (See Shiloah's telegram to Herzog, WIA785, 3 October 1956, 93.01/2213/11).

455. Y. Avidar (Moscow) to the East European Division. 2 October 1956

Coded Tel. 576; Inc.: 130.09/2326/8

Summary

Avidar reports on his meeting with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin. At the meeting two issues were discussed: freedom of passage in the Suez Canal and the situation on the borders.

Avidar first handed Zorin Israel's response to the Soviet statement concerning Suez.[1] Zorin studied the text and said that Paragraph 4 showed that Israel was not planning to reduce the tension in the region, since its meaning was that if all parties agreed to a certain solution of the Suez question and Israel opposed it, it reserved to itself the right to act, including sending ships through the Canal. Avidar reiterated Israel's position regarding its right of freedom of passage in Suez. Zorin did not react. Afterwards Avidar gave him Israel's reply to Zorin's statement regarding the situation on the borders.[2] Zorin said that Israel's reply was not objective and it emerged from it that in the future as well Israel would continue to carry out repressive acts against the Arab states. In reply Avidar reiterated the Israeli position and cited the series of futile attempts by Israel and the U.N. to bring about quiet on the borders. Zorin repeated his complaint and said that while it was permitted to repulse an assailant, I.D.F. units were taking premeditated action deep inside Arab territory. Avidar replied that Israel had to penetrate deep into enemy territory in order to strike at their bases.

Notes

1. See No. 452.
2. See No. 434. For the main points of the Israeli reply see No. 450. The full text of the reply is in File 93.03/546/8.
3. See No. 449.
4. See No. 434.
5. The date on which the Arab states bordering Israel assured Hammarskjöld that they would observe the ceasefire along the borders.

6. On the night of 23 July a handgrenade was thrown at the children's house in Kibbutz Ma'ale Hahamisha – See No. 347, n. 5.
7. On 23 September the Jordanian Army opened machine-gun fire on the participants in the conference of the Israel Exploration Society at Ramat Rachel – See No. 432, n.1.
8. See No. 443 and n. 2 there.
9. See Nos. 376 and 430, n. 1.

456. Note for the Record by D. Ben-Gurion. 3 October 1956

IMDEA 890/73/2704

Summary

Ben-Gurion writes that he is trying to put into writing his "carefully weighed response" to the proposal of French-Israeli cooperation against Egypt.[1]

Israel was duty bound to defend itself come what may. Nasser's aim was to destroy it, and Israel must look for friends wherever they may be, for without friends it would not be able to arm itself properly. Obviously there was no one-sided friendship.

For this reason Israel could not ignore the proposals of its friends (the French) but it must weigh the issues carefully, and he saw some grave problems in the plan, in the event of the French remaining alone together with Israel.

1. It was not at all certain that a joint action, even if successful, would bring about Nasser's removal. He could organise guerrillas, and it was doubtful whether the French could sustain a prolonged struggle. There was also the fear of the dispatch of Russian volunteers. Without Nasser's swift. elimination there was no assurance that the struggle would end speedily, even if there were military successes in the first stage.

2. Without British participation in the action the French would have to act from inside Israel, which would mean that Israel would be seen as the instigator, and this would endanger it.

3. An Israeli operation with the French alone was liable to arouse the opposition and ill-will of the Americans, which would not be the case if the British were included.

4. An operation with the French alone would arouse the Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq or Jordan, or one of them. This would not be the case if Britain were to join in, for then these states, or some of them, would be happy at Nasser's misfortune.

In his opinion these considerations must be stated openly and frankly to the French.

Notes

1. Following the discussions which took place in Saint Germain on 30 September - 1 October, a French delegation left for Israel to explore the possibilities of a military operation against Egypt, even if France and Israel would have to undertake it themselves, without British participation. The discussions with the French delegation, which included Louis Mangin, the adviser of the minister of defence, and General Maurice Challe, the deputy chief of staff, and on the Israeli side, the prime minister, the chief of staff and the director-general of the Ministry of Defence, took place on 3-4 October. On the discussions see M. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 242-244 [Hebrew]; M. Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 219-223.

457. Y. Tekoah to the Israel Missions Abroad. 3 October 1956

Coded Circular Telegram 120; Outg.: 130.02/2440/3

Summary

Following the discussion on the Ramat Rachel shooting incident,[1] when the chairman of the commission accepted the Jordanian version that the soldier who fired was deranged, Tekoah states that Israel had announced that there was no point in its participation in the routine discussions of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission.[2] Israel would continue to present complaints, but would not participate in discussions about them, and would also not participate in discussion of Jordanian complaints.

Notes

1. On the incident at Ramat Rachel, see No. 432, n. 1. On 1 October 1956 the Armistice Commission discussed this incident. Israel left the discussions after it became clear that the chairman supported the Jordanian version that the attack was carried out by a lone soldier who ran amok.
2. See telegram to the Israel Missions Abroad, uncoded circular 119, 3 October 1956, 130.02/2439/10.

458. A. Eban [New York] to J. F. Dulles (Washington). 3 October 1956

Copy: 130.20/2476/6

Notes

1. See No. 446.
2. At a press conference on 2 October Dulles said among other things: "It seems to me that Israel's views (concerning the Suez Canal) must come in one form or another before the Security Council" (See *Ha'aretz*, 3 October 1956).

459. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division. 3 October 1956

Coded Tel. 675; Inc.: 130.02/2450/4

Summary

Elath reports on the progress of discussions at the third London conference of the Canal Users' Association.[1] The main argument concerned the principle of membership, which the British wish to limit as far as possible to the states which have a commercial interest in the Canal and not to permit membership on the basis of political interest. Therefore they are insisting on the principle of a million tons,[2] or that at least half of the trade of the state wishing to join should pass through the Canal. Israel's case was not raised. In a conversation with some of the ambassadors participating in the discussion Elath was told that the British Foreign Ministry believed that any action in favour of Israel at this time, whether regarding membership in the Association or an appearance at the Security Council, was liable to hamper negotiations with Nasser.

Notes

1. The reference is to the "Third" London conference, which opened on 1 October 1956 and discussed the establishment of the institutions of the Suez Canal Users' Association. The conference chairman was British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd and the states were represented by their ambassadors in London.
2. That is, that the state concerned had trade of at least one million tons passing through the Canal.
3. The "Second" London conference – See No. 431.

460. Israel Embassy in Moscow to the East European Division. 3 October 1956

Coded Tel. 579; Inc.: 130.02/2457/15

Summary

The embassy draws the attention of the division to the accumulation of events and Soviet reactions which indicate a deterioration in relations with Israel, They are a clear evidence of a tougher line towards Israel.[7]

Notes

1. See, for example, *Izvestya* of 30 September, containing reports from Cairo, Damascus and Beirut in which Israel is accused of provocations against Jordan with the consent of England (See the embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 570, 30 September 1956, 130.09/2326/7).
   For additional articles in *Izvestya* see Nos. 373, 449.
2. See Nos. 434, 455.
3. The reference is to a conversation which took place on 2 October. Chelouche was summoned to receive answers to various practical questions which he had submitted on 28 June. The replies he received were evasive and at times even discourteous (See the embassy in Moscow to the East European Division, Tel. 580, 3 October 1956, 130.02/2457/15).
4. See No. 343 and n. 1 there.
5. See Chelouche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 537, 25 September 1956, 130.09/2326/7.
6. Zena Harman, deputy director of the Department of Technical Assistance in the Prime Minister's Office and the Israel representative at the U.N. Conference on the Status of Women, participated in an international seminar on the status of women held in Moscow between 15-30 September.
7. The director of the East European Division, A. Eshel, also dealt with this matter in a memorandum to Eytan on 21 October. In his view they must not keep silent about the turnabout in the policy of the Soviet Union, which adversely affects Israel's status among other Eastern Bloc states and increases the political and military power of the Arab states. He proposed that they should launch a systematic campaign among those bodies and elements in the free world which the Soviet Union respects and makes use of in its policies (In File 130.11/2507/4).

461. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and S. Z. Shragai. 3 October 1956

Coded Tel. 656; Inc.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Tsur gives a summary of the consultation about immigration from Morocco. Officials from the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency participated in the consultation, together with embassy staff. The conclusion was that negotiations should begin with the Moroccan government on what would be termed "individual assisted emigration," the practical aim being to bring out the 40-50,000 Jews who had registered to go to Israel. They should ask the government of Morocco to agree for an office or agency to assist with the arrangements, requests for passports, dealing with refusals etc. The office could be that of the World Jewish Congress or of HIAS. In the meantime pressure must be applied on the Moroccan government, in Washington,[3] in London and in articles in the press.[5]

Notes

1. N. Ben-Menahem, director of the Aliya Department Office of the Jewish Agency in Paris.
2. This apparently refers to the memorandum which Bekkai prepared for the sultan of Morocco. Among other things it stated that the Moroccan government was adopting a position in principle against the departure of Jews, which was contrary to the wish of the sultan to conduct a policy of non-discrimination for the benefit of all his subjects. Bekkai accuses the French and "Zionist propaganda" of encouraging emigration. The memorandum also stated: "There can be no question whether a Jew has or does not have the right to emigrate," since this is a natural right mentioned in the Declaration of Human Rights. "Morocco, like any democratic state, recognises this right, but does not waive its right to regulate emigration and to preserve its sovereignty" (See J. Tsur, *Paris Diary*, p. 285 [Hebrew]).
3. The Israel embassy staff in Washington raised the issue in the State Department and were told that the Americans "would check on the spot and render the maximum assistance possible, whilst stressing that their ability was limited" (See the embassy in Washington to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel.WNT144, 17 October 1956, 130.09/2338/24).
4. The immigrant camp near Casablanca.
5. Tsur reported on the situation in Morocco at the government session on 21 October. He said that the Moroccan government recognised the right of the Jews to emigrate and they had no intention of violating the principle of personal freedom of movement. They were against mass emigration. Consequently the Israeli representatives were conducting negotiations on the basis of individual immigration, but insisted on the Moroccans recognising the existence of an institution or institutions charged with

receiving the emigrants and checking who could leave. He personally did not have any illusions regarding the results of these negotiations and therefore efforts were under way to get Jews out of there in every possible way (See stenographic report of the government meeting, ISA, 21 October 1956).

462. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 5 October 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 127; Outg.: 130.09/2332/1

Summary

Tekoah informed Burns, on the initiative of the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, that Israel refuses to participate in the inquiry into the recent incident on the Sodom road,[1] following the position adopted by the commission chairman over the Husan affair.[3] Burns replied that this meant that Israel refused to cooperate with the U.N. in the inquiry into the incident and he would report back accordingly to the secretary-general and would also issue a statement. Tekoah replied that the issuing of statements by the U.N. had in the past played a not insignificant part in the development of the factors that had led Israel to leave the Armistice Commission. Burns agreed to content himself with a report to the secretary-general.[4]

Notes

1. On 4 October the Jordanians attacked a convoy of cars travelling from the potash works in Sodom to Beersheba. Five of the passengers in the convoy were killed.
2. See No. 457.
3. On 4 October the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission discussed the Husan incident in Israel's absence (See No. 436, Editorial Note). The chairman voted in favour of the Jordanian draft resolution condemning Israel for what was described as "an unprovoked and premeditated attack against Jordanian territory."
4. Eban expressed criticism of the position adopted by Tekoah. Israel's refusal to participate in the inquiry would mean that there would never be any chance to obtain the recognition of a third party of any damage to Israel, and this meant giving up the struggle for public opinion in advance (See his telegram to G. Meir, No. X652, 6 October 1956, 130.09/2333/2). See also No. 464.

463. G. Meir (Jerusalem) to the Israel Ambassador in Washington. 5 October 1956

Original; 93.08/362/10

Summary

Israel must ensure that the problem of the Jews of the Soviet Union engages the conscience of the world and does not leave the agenda. Meir instructs the ambassador to expand and intensify recruitment of friendly foreign elements about to visit the Soviet Union so that in their talks there they should raise the problem of the Soviet Jews and the Soviet Union's attitude to Israel. He is also requested to report on any development in the sphere of relations between the country he is serving in and the Soviet Union which might be exploited for Israel's benefit.

Notes

1. A French Socialist Parliamentary delegation visited the Soviet Union in May 1956. On its talks see Y. Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948–1967*, pp. 107-108.

464. Y. Tekoah (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 7 October 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 133; Outg.: 130.02/2440/3

Summary

Tekoah reports that after the issuing of the statement by the Foreign Ministry spokesman about Burns' request to investigate the incident on the Sodom road,[1] Burns had issued two statements; in one he announced that he had approached Israel requesting it to cooperate in the inquiry of the U.N. observers and in the second he explained the decision of the chairman of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission to accept the Jordanian version of the Husan incident. Tekoah presents guidelines to help the missions in informing the press, their main thrust being that the U.N. Command is not authorised to interpret the right of self defence and that according to the Armistice Agreement there was no need for the U.N. observers to conduct an inquiry following an incident.

Note

1. See No. 462.
   In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman it said that the ministry had informed Burns that in keeping with earlier statements Israel did not believe that there was any point in discussing incidents in the Armistice Commission or in their investigation by the U.N. observers. Israel's view had been reinforced by the fact that only a few days previously the chairman of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Commission had adopted a position that had become the policy of the U.N. Observer Command. In the discussion on the Husan operation the Commission chairman had seen fit to accept the Jordanian version as if there had been no provocation prior to the action. This approach could only mean that the frequent incidents of murder of Israelis by Jordanians which had preceded this action did not constitute provocation. Under such circumstances Israel had nothing to add to its previously declared view (See *Ha'aretz*, 7 October 1956).

465. G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to the Israel Permanent Mission to the U.N. 7 October 1956

Coded Tel. 646;130.02/2450/4

Summary

Rafael draws Eban's attention to the fear that while Israel was busy dealing with the issue of its right to appear in the Security Council debate on Suez, a compromise plan was being elaborated concerning the freedom of passage. He therefore suggested that Eban should request a meeting with the four foreign ministers of the Western countries[2] and with the foreign minister of Yugoslavia to find out the truth about the negotiations taking place with Egypt and what steps they were taking to safeguard Israel's freedom of shipping. From Yahil's conversation with Unden it emerged that despite many appeals the Menzies committee in Cairo had not raised the Israeli issue, and that the idea had been suggested of raising the Israeli issue in the International Court at the Hague.[3] Both the secretary-general of the U.N. and Egypt appeared to favour this idea.[4]

Notes

1. Eban's telegram to the Foreign Ministry of 6 October (No. 53, in File 130.02/2409/9) states, among other things, that Pineau had suggested that the Security Council devote a session to hearing the arguments of non-member states, that is, Israel and the Arab states.
2. The United States, Britain, France and Belgium.

3. See Selwyn Lloyd's remarks to Eban in No. 469.
4. Eban's reply, see No. 479.

466. A. Eban [New York] to J. F. Dulles (New York). 7 October 1956

Copy: 93.03/3040/4

Notes

1. See No. 465, n. 1.
2. See No. 469 and n. 1 there.
3. Dulles replied (Letter to Eban, 9 October 1956, 130.20/2476/6) that he favoured finding a way to make it possible for Eban to appear before the Security Council.

467. United States Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions in Washington, Paris and London. 7 October 1956

Coded Tel.; 130.09/2312/9

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between Lawson and the prime minister and the minister for foreign affairs. Lawson began by saying that the State Department noted with satisfaction that Israel was not opposed to the entry of Iraqi forces to Jordan. Assistance to Jordan was extremely important in view of the anti-Western tendencies appearing there and the instability in that country. Since apparently a foreign army would enter Jordan, the department would prefer it to be an Iraqi and not an Egyptian army. He added that the intention was for a symbolic force, and the State Department had taken very careful note of the prime minister's views on this subject as voiced in a previous conversation.[3]

Ben-Gurion said that he wished to raise a number of questions. What would be the size of the "symbolic" force? Would it be armed with heavy weapons? Israel did not want the force to come near to Israeli settlements close to the Jordan. How long would the force stay and was this not the first step to the swallowing up of Jordan by Iraq?

Lawson replied that only 100–200 soldiers were involved, without heavy weapons. As for swallowing up Jordan, he said frankly that he had not the slightest hint regarding any thoughts on this point.

The minister of foreign affairs added that the United States must use its influence to inform Jordan and Iraq that it expected them to preserve the calm on the border, and that the Jordanians should not try to exploit the internal quiet in Jordan following the entry of the Iraqi army for adventures on the border. Lawson agreed that the United States must raise this point with the two governments.

Notes

1. See No. 453.
2. See No. 454, n. 3.
3. On the conversation with Herzog see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassy in Washington, Tel. 495, 3 October 1956, 93.01/2213/11.
4. See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Israel Missions Abroad, Circular 252, 17 November 1955, 130.09/2312/9.

468. D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (Washington). 7 October 1956

Copy: 130.02/2404/6

Summary

Ben-Gurion writes that he considers it necessary to express to Eban his concern regarding Hammarsjköld's last report,[1] which had confirmed his grave fears that the secretary sees himself as a kind of supreme ruler over Israel, as if the U.N. or the Security Council had a mandate over Israel and he is authorised to execute it as he sees fit. Since his arrival in the region he had displayed two-faced behaviour in all his actions. His attitude was one of discrimination towards Israel as against the Arab nations. The discrimination was also striking in his last report, according to which all the Arab states want peace, whereas it was clear to all that this was not the case. Ben-Gurion intended to put his reservations about the report into writing, and if necessary would publish his letter.

In the meantime the situation in Israel had worsened, the armistice commission had decided, in accordance with the Jordanian proposal, that the Husan operation had been conducted without any provocation on the part of Jordan, and other acts of murder have also been discounted. Consequently Israel had decided not to appeal again to the U.N. personnel with a request to hold an inquiry and discussion about the incident.[6]

At the end of his letter Ben-Gurion notes that he is unhappy with the United States' attitude towards Israel. If the loan was given, he would mention this in his remarks in the Knesset debate, which had been postponed for another week.[7] But he would not praise the Administration since it had not assisted Israel with arms. It was not enough for it to advise others to give arms – the Americans had sufficient weapons to do so.

Notes

1. See No. 445.
2. See No. 263 and n. 2 there.
3. See No. 240 (Editorial Note).
4. See No. 414, n.1.
5. See No. 263.
6. See No. 464.
7. Ben-Gurion delivered his speech in the Knesset on 15 October – See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), Second Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XXI, pp. 57-65.

469. A. Eban (New York) to G. Rafael. 8 October 1956

Coded Tel. X660; Inc.: 130.02/2457/1

Summary

Eban reports on his conversation with Lloyd.[1] He tried to convince him of the need for Israel's appearance at the Security Council debates. Lloyd softened a little and acknowledged that without stressing the violations against Israel the West's complaints against Egypt would be a little feeble. It was agreed that he would talk with Dulles and Pineau and they would reach a joint decision. Eban also talked about the situation at the Canal in general. He stressed that it was important not only that Israel should hear that it had been right in the past but that any settlement to be reached should recognise Israel's right of passage. He mentioned that Dulles and Mollet had already stated that any assistance given by the Canal Users' Association to ships in general would in any case be granted to Israel.[3] Lloyd replied that it was his initial impression that there was no reason why Britain should not commit itself, as had Mollet and Dulles, but he would weigh the matter in greater detail. He added that any plan which Britain would back would be based on freedom of passage for all states without exception. A forum

would be established to investigate violations, and it could be assumed that this would be the International Court.

Notes

1. Eban does not state when the conversation took place, but it was apparently on or before October 7, as mentioned in No. 466.
2. See No. 465, n. 1.
3. Regarding Dulles see No. 446, n. 3.
4. See No. 447.
5. On 4 June 1956 the Security Council unanimously adopted the British draft resolution on Hammarskjöld's report on his Middle East mission in April-May 1956. This was after a debate in the course of which the Arab states demanded deletion from the text of a paragraph requiring a solution to the Palestine question acceptable to all the parties. The Soviet Union supported the Arab position and the paragraph was deleted. See No. 277 (Editorial Note).

470. Note from the Israel Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade (Moscow). 8 October 1956

Copy: 93.39/546/8

Notes

1. See No. 334. The date of the Note is actually 12 July, and not "June," as written by mistake.
2. This Note was submitted on 8 October by Avidar to Borisov, first deputy of the minister of foreign trade. For a report on this meeting see Chelouche's letter of 11 October 1956 in File 130.11/2507/10.

471. United States Division to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 9 October 1956

Coded Tel. IWA527; Inc.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

The division reports that Lawson had been urgently summoned to the minister of foreign affairs who informed him about Nuri al-Sa'id's statement that the time had come to force peace on Israel according to the 1947 partition borders. This declaration, and the British response to it,[1] sheds a

completely new light on the request to allow an Iraqi force to be stationed in Jordan.[2] In reply to Lawson's question the minister said that Israel could not cooperate with the original plan until the British position was made clear and Israel received appropriate guarantees that this was not the beginning of the solution of the Palestine question. She also added that if it was al-Sa'id's intention to act in Jordan, it was desirable that he should have direct contact with Israel. In response to Lawson's observation that the United States could act as a mediator, the minister replied that direct contact was more effective, so that Israel could properly defend its own interests. Lawson concluded by saying that he understands that in addition to the previous Israeli reservations a new reservation had been added to which a satisfactory answer was also required. The minister replied in the affirmative, and stressed that this was a major and fundamental reservation but did not cancel previous ones.

Notes

1. On 8 October 1956 the London *Times* published an interview from its correspondent in Baghdad with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa'id. Among other things he said that a peace settlement should be forced on Israel under the 1947 Security Council resolutions. Following these remarks the British Foreign Office issued a statement in support of al-Sa'id's opinion, and Britain's desire to help in this, in accordance with Eden's speech of November 1955 (the Guildhall speech). In response, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman issued a statement saying that al-Sa'id's remarks revealed the true intention of Iraq which was to strike at the sovereignty and integrity of Israel. As for the British, he reiterated Ben-Gurion's statement in the Knesset in November 1955 in response to the Guildhall speech that the suggestions for reducing Israel's territory for the benefit of its neighbours had no legal or moral basis, and should not even be considered (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Missions Abroad, uncoded circular 156, 10 October 1956, 130.09/2377/4).
2. See No. 453.
3. The elections to the Jordanian parliament were due to be held on 21 October.

472. A. Eban (Washington) to D. Ben-Gurion. 9 October 1956

Coded Tel. WIA810; Outg.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

Eban replies to Ben-Gurion's letter[1] and refers to his complaints about Hammarsjköld. He was planning to talk with the secretary-general although it was doubtful if the latter would change his position. Regarding the proposal to write an additional letter and publish it, he advises Ben-Gurion to wait for

his talk with Hammarsjköld. Eban disagrees with Ben-Gurion's criticism of the Administration's position over the loan and the supply of arms. He presents a series of facts to illustrate that the overall account, although not entirely positive, is also not entirely negative. He therefore suggests that in his forthcoming speech in the Knesset, Ben-Gurion should acknowledge the American contribution and should keep within the framework of the facts.[5]

Notes

1. A telegram containing the essence of Ben-Gurion's letter to Eban – No. 468. See No. 453.
2. See No.465 and n. 1 there.
3. See No. 451.
4. In his Knesset speech Ben-Gurion said: "The United States has recognised in theory the need to adjust the arms balance between Israel and the neighbouring countries, and has encouraged its allies to provide defensive weapons. We cannot be satisfied with this encouragement alone, and we shall continue to demand defensive weapons." With regard to the loan he said: "And we benefit not a little from international political and material assistance. A striking example is the aid which we received from the United State of America in the form of loans and grants. We are currently conducting negotiations with the Export- Import Bank concerning a big loan for irrigation needs, and soon a delegation from that bank will arrive here for this purpose" (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), Second Session of the Third Knesset, Vol. XXI, pp. 58, 64).

473. E. Najar (Jerusalem) to the Prime Minister. 9 October 1956

Copy: 93.02/193/9

Summary

Najar reports on the French chargé d'affairs Fernand-Laurent's conversation with the minister of foreign affairs. He said that he had received an urgent instruction from Paris to find out what Israel's position would be in the event of Iraqi forces entering Jordan. The French were not in favour of this step, but their position would depend to a large extent on that of Israel. They could not be more Israeli than Israel. They feared that a symbolic force would not be sufficient, and the region was liable to enter a highly dangerous period. The minister of foreign affairs reported to him on the talks with the American ambassador and the clarifications that had been given. She reiterated her apprehensions about the British actions. At the end

of the conversation it was agreed that Fernand-Laurent would immediately seek to clarify the British intention. Additional inquiries would be made by Eban in conversations with Pineau and, if necessary, with Lloyd.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 453.
2. See No. 471.
3. A note in the margins of this paragraph states: "Laurent went back to Najar especially in order to stress the absolute confidentiality of the report. Y(ehiel) I(lsar)."
4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed this report to the ambassadors in Washington, London and Paris. The ambassador in Paris was also told: "Our major concern is of course that England is behind the plan for the entry of Iraqi forces to Jordan. It is essential that the French speak candidly with us and reveal to us what they know about the intentions of England and the United States. If their position is dependent on our position, our position too is dependent on what they can contribute to a full understanding of the situation. Strongly recommend that you hold the conversation with Joxe and return the ball to his court. In light of your talks and Eban's conversations we shall be able to review the situation." Separately, Eban was directed to hold talks with Pineau, who was in the United States (See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassies in Washington, London and Paris, Circular 145, 9 October 1956, 130.09/2377/4; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassies in Washington, London and Paris, Circular 147, 10 October 1956, 130.09/2312/9).
   Eban's report on his conversation with Pineau see in No. 480. Tsur for his part held two conversations with Daridan, in one of which Roux took part (See Tsur to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 749, 13 October 1956, 130.09/2347/2; Tsur to Meir and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs , Tel. 752, 14 October 1956, 130.02/2453/10). He was told that the French were asking the British to exert influence on Iraq "not to precipitate matters." The French believed that the British had behaved rudely and tactlessly towards Israel. The British for their part claim that it was not they who had initiated the plan, but the Jordanians, and even Iraq had hesitated greatly before agreeing. While the Americans consider the plan to be a sound one, they wash their hands of it and maintain that they never initiated it. Tsur held a further conversation with Joxe (See his telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel.754, 15 October 1956, 130.09/2347/2). He was told that the French had told the British that they opposed any step that would be forced on Israel. The British also evaded saying how long the Iraqi Army was due to remain in Jordan.

474. M. Kidron (New York) to G. Rafael. 9 October 1956

Coded Tel. X676; Inc.: 130.02/2409/9

Summary

Kidron reports on the Security Council debates regarding Suez.[1] The speech of the Yugoslav representative had been a disappointment, and Dulles too, like Lloyd and Pineau, did not mention the 1951 resolution, but contented himself with quoting the remarks of the Egyptian representative from the *Bat Galim* affair.[2] He later maintained that this was proof that he had not forgotten Israel. After the debates the representatives of the group of 18 countries convened and Dulles and Lloyd tried to convince them that the group's plan was still valid. In the closed session that followed nothing new emerged, nor was Israel's request to participate discussed. A compromise plan was being worked out in the Western camp, its main element being to separate the technical management of the Canal from the political aspect. The political aspect meant safeguarding freedom of passage and setting the fees for passage. Political supervision would be assigned to an international committee, one of whose members would be Egyptian. In the event of an Egyptian violation of the regulations, sanctions would be imposed, or, in the American version, an appeal to the U.N.

Notes

1. The Security Council debate on the Suez question opened on 5 October 1956. Before the Council were two letters, one from the governments of France and Britain requesting that the Council discuss the situation that had arisen in the wake of Egypt's unilateral action putting an end to the international operation of the Canal in accordance with the 1888 Convention, and the second from the Egyptian government, requesting that the Council discuss the actions against Egypt on the part of Britain and France which represented a danger to world peace. At the start of the debate the British and the French laid on the Council table a draft resolution (S/3666) endorsing the resolutions adopted by the group of 18 states which had been organised at the London Conference with regard to operating the Canal, and calling on Egypt to cooperate in working out a system of operating the Canal based on these resolutions. During the debate a resolution was adopted postponing to a later date discussion of the request of Israel and the Arab states to participate. On the course of the debates and the resolutions see No. 485 (Editorial Note).
2. The reference is to the remarks of the Egyptian representative Mahmud Azmi in the debate on 14 October 1954 on the arrest of the *Bat Galim* vessel in the Suez Canal, that Egypt would exercise tolerance in everything having to do with the passage of ships bearing goods coming from or bound for Israel (See Vol. 9, No. 413, Editorial Note).

3. The plan was submitted by Krishna Menon, India's permanent U.N. representative, to the British and the Egyptians. The main points of the plan: 1. The technical operation of the Canal would be in Egyptian hands. 2. Egypt would recognise the Users' Association and its right to represent its members in everything to do with the technical operation of the Canal. 3. Disputes between the Users' Association and the Canal management would be settled by arbitration. 4. Political disputes, such as interference with the freedom of passage, would be submitted to the International Court (See Kidron to Rafael, Tel. 696, 11 October 1956, 130.09/2333/2).

475. A. Eban (Washington) to the United States Division. 9 October 1956

Coded Tel. WIA809; Outg.: 93.01/2188/1

Summary

Eban reports on a conversation with the heads of the Export-Import Bank.[1] The president, Waugh, said that the Bank had made progress in studying the matter and he was interested in sending a delegation to Israel to examine the project on the spot. He requested Eban's authorisation to issue a statement to this effect. Eban said that Israel would welcome the delegation, but did not see any point in issuing a routine statement, so long as it did not state unequivocally that a positive decision in principle had been reached regarding the loan. Waugh agreed to receive an amended text from Israel. Eban is drafting such a text.[2]

Notes

1. On the events that preceded this conversation see No. 446 and n. 6 there.
2. The discussions with Waugh concerning the statement about the delegation continued in a conversation on 11 October (See Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. WIA818, 11 October 1956, 93.01/2213/4). The statement was issued on 11 October and its main point was that following talks with Eshkol and Eban, the Bank had decided to send to Israel shortly a delegation of economists to carry out an on-the-spot study of the implications of Israel's request to receive a loan for a programme of economic development. The delegation would be headed by the Bank's vice-president, L.A. Stambaugh.
   Because of the Sinai Campaign the delegation's visit was postponed and it took place in July 1957.

476. Editorial Note

The I.D.F. Operation in Qalqilya

On the night between 11-12 October a parachute unit attacked the Jordanian Army base at the police station in Qalqilya. The operation ran into trouble after an I.D.F. blocking force which was operating deep inside Jordan territory was surrounded by a Jordanian unit. A fierce battle ensued which lasted three hours, and for the first time the I.D.F. used planes (Harvards and Mosquitoes), which did not participate in the fighting and contented themselves with flying over the belligerents. The I.D.F. sustained 18 killed and 68 wounded. The Jordanian losses were 88 killed and 15 wounded.

This operation was preceded by a number of events: on 9 October infiltrators coming from Jordan had murdered two workers working in an orchard in the Sharon. Before that King Hussein had given orders to release the killers of three Druze guards in En Ofarim on 12 October, who also admitted to the murder of five Jewish workers in Sodom on 4 October. The conclusion in Israel was that the restraint exercised by Israel recently had been seen as weakness, and therefore it was decided to make a vigorous response.

The severe results of the Qalqilya operation had a greater impact than the retaliatory raids that had preceded it. During the battle King Hussein even contacted the commander of the British forces in the Middle East and demanded that the British-Jordanian defence treaty of 1948 be activated, and that the British Air Force should enter the battle, while in Israel they came to the conclusion that the system of retaliatory actions required revision (See M. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 246-251 [Hebrew]).

477. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 11 October 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 159; Outg.: 130.09/2377/4

Summary

The ministry sends the missions information guidelines following the Qalqiliya operation.[1] In background conversations it should be pointed out that Israel fears that the renewed provocation of the last few days is connected with the broad British-Iraqi-Jordanian plan for the entry of the Iraqi army into Jordan and with the aim of harming Israel's political standing

and sovereignty and its territory, as implied in Nuri al-Sa'id's statement and the British Foreign Ministry's response.[2]

Notes

1. See Editorial Note above.
2. See No. 471 and n. 1 there.
3. See No. 447 and n. 2 there.
4. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs telegram to the Israel Missions Abroad, Circular No. 151, 10 October 1956, 130.09/2377/4.

478. E. Elath (London) to the British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) and J. Tsur (Paris). 11 October 1956

Coded Tel. 724; Inc.: 130.09/2321/4

Summary

Elath was summoned to a conversation with Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick began by requesting a clarification of a Jordanian complaint that I.A.F. planes, including a plane of British manufacture, had taken part in the Qalqiliya battle, and said that King Hussein had asked the R.A.F. to come to the assistance of the Jordanian army.[1] He added that if this was true it placed Britain in a difficult position. Elath replied that he had no information about this and would convey the matter to his government. Afterwards Kirkpatrick proceeded to the subject of the entry of the Iraqi force into Jordan and said that Britain supported this plan which was designed to curb Nasser and stabilise Jordan, and would also benefit Israel. Elath replied that Israel was apprehensive about the entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan which would only be the initial stage in a larger plan, especially after the remarks of Nuri al-Sa'id and the subsequent response of the British Foreign Ministry.[2]

In reply Kirkpatrick said that he wished to make it clear that the statement by the British Foreign Ministry spokesman was made without permission from him. He wished to recall his promise from an earlier conversation that Britain recognised Israel as a sovereign state[3] and had no intention of imposing a territorial settlement on it without its approval, and that it was bound by the Tripartite Declaration. Elath took advantage of this in order to bring up the question of supply of Centurion tanks again. Kirkpatrick reiterated the promise he had given previously, when Britain refused to supply them, that Israel could renew its request for the supply of these weapons at the end of a three month period after the refusal.[4]

Elath's conclusion from the conversation was that its purpose was to calm Israel and to dispel its fears over the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan.

Notes

1. See No. 476 (Editorial Note).
2. See No. 471, n. 1.
3. In the conversation, which took place on 8 October, Kirkpatrick said that it was important that Israel "remember at all times [...] that the British Government recognises Israel as a sovereign state and that in the event we are attacked it will come to our assistance, an obligation which it took upon itself under the Tripartite Declaration and which it is determined to keep" (See Elath to the British Commonwealth Division, Tel. 701, 8 October 1956, 130.02/2450/4).
4. See No. 413.
5. See No. 414, n. 1.

479. A. Eban (New York) to G. Rafael. 11 October 1956

Coded Tel. XA692/2213/4

Summary

Eban reports on the discussions in the closed sessions of the Security Council. There were no grounds for suspecting that an agreement was being reached between the sides. In fact, no progress had been achieved. There was a British tendency to make concessions on fundamental principles of the London plan,[3] but the French had made sure that the British toed the line. On the issue of the freedom of navigation for all states there is a united front as on preservation of the principle of freedom of passage. However, one could not know the value of the principle until it was put to a real test. To sum up, there is no serious discussion and the general assumption is that the episode will end without any results whatsoever.

Notes

1. Rafael's telegram to Eban, 12 October 1956, 130.09/2332/1. In this telegram Rafael referred to No. 465, adding to it only that the foreign minister "approves a talk with Shepilov."
2. See No. 474.
3. See No. 387 (Editorial Note).
4. See Kidron to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 696, 11 October 1956, 130.09/2333/2.

480. A. Eban (New York) to the United States Division and the West European Division. 11 October 1956

Coded Tel. XA687; Outg.: 93.01/2188/11

Summary

Acting on a request from Israel[1] Eban talked with Pineau about the proposed entry of an Iraqi force into Jordan. France does not see any reason to protest the plan, since Israel had agreed to it. The plan seemed right for the short term, since it was designed to curb Nasser's expansionist tendencies. Eban understood that his advice was that Israel should accept the plan, but should make sure that it was limited to modest dimensions, as Israel itself had suggested.

Notes

1. See No. 473 and n. 4 there.
2. Apparently refers to the third paragraph of the Tripartite Declaration which permits each of the signatories to take measures, in the framework of the U.N. or outside it, if one of the Middle Eastern states does not respect the borders or armistice lines of another. See Vol. 5, Main Volume, No. 248.

481. United States Division (Jerusalem) to A. Eban (New York). 12 October 1956

Coded Tel. GHA1-7; Inc.: 93.01/2188/11

Summary

The division reports that the British chargé d'affaires had been received that day by the minister for foreign affairs. He reported to her that Iraq had informed the British Government that it had been asked by Jordan to send a military force to Jordan. This force would not cross the border to the West Bank and would not be armed with heavy weapons. Britain was sure that in such circumstances Israel would not react by force to the entry of the military force into Jordan. In her response the minister raised the following questions: the size of the force, the duration of its stay, its equipment, where it would be stationed. She spoke in the spirit of the letter which was later given to Lawson,[2] and stressed that the British message was a statement

without any consideration for Israel on the entry of the force into Jordan, and that she expected answers to her questions. The chargé d'affaires did not respond and announced that he would convey her remarks to his government.

Notes

1. See No. 471, n. 1.
2. No. 483.
3. A report on the conversation was given at the government meeting on 14 October.
4. See No. 490.

482. United States Division to A. Eban and R. Shiloah (Washington). 12 October 1956

Coded Tel.TNW538; Outg.: 130.02/2453/10

Summary

Lawson met with Herzog, the director of the United States Division, and, while reading from the written text, he gave the State Department's answers to the questions put by the prime minister. The United States had no indication that Iraq was planning to swallow up Jordan. The intention was to station a force there to stabilise Jordan. The United States had drawn the Jordanians' attention to the need to preserve quiet on the borders. As for Nuri al-Sa'id's statement and the response of the British Foreign Office spokesman,[2] in the State Department's view they were a repetition of positions expressed in the past and contained nothing new.

Notes

1. See No. 471.
2. See ibid., n. 1.
3. See No. 453.
4. See No. 481.

483. G. Meir (Jerusalem) to E. Lawson (Tel Aviv). 12 October 1956

Copy: 93.03/3064/7

484. R. Pilpul (Addis Ababa) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 12 October 1956

Coded Tel.; Inc.: 130.14/2559/12

Summary

Pilpul reports on his meeting with the emperor of Ethiopia. The emperor said that he saw no reason to delay formal recognition of Israel. On his return from his tour[2] he would invite Pilpul for an official conversation. He added that he did not believe in the possibility of correct relations without mutual interests.[3] He believes in Israeli assistance to exploit his country's resources. Pilpul gave Burma as an example of benefit in mutual relations, without bowing to Arab pressure. The emperor agreed. Pilpul intends to accompany the emperor to the airport and requests instructions.[5]

Notes

1. Emanuel Tamrat, an Ethiopian Jew who was close to the emperor, was a researcher in ancient Ethiopian literature, a former adviser at the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and cultural affairs adviser in the Ethiopian embassy in Paris.
2. The emperor was due to leave for a visit to India and Burma.
3. This meeting took place on 19 March 1957. The emperor promised to instruct the minister of foreign affairs to summon Pilpul for a conversation "in order to clarify details of the recognition." He complained about the fact that Israel's interest in his country was confined to trade relations, without assistance in developing industry and agriculture (See Pilpul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel. 238, 20 March 1957, 130.15/3740/9).
4. The proposed meeting in Rangoon did not take place in the end – see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Consulate-General in Addis Ababa, Tel.15, 4 December 1956, 130.09/2285/7.
5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reply said: "Excellent, expecting a positive outcome. We have informed Shimoni. Of course you will escort him [to the airport] (Levin to the consulate-general of Israel in Addis Ababa, Tel. 34, 18 October 1956, 130.09/2559/12). A full report of the conversation is in Pilpul's letter to the Asia and Africa Division, 18 October 1956, 130.02/2414/13.

   Ethiopia's de jure recognition of Israel was delayed, perhaps for fear of Egyptian reaction, and was only granted in October 1961. For the same reason Ethiopia

continued to be represented in Israel by a consul-general, whereas Israel raised the status of its consulate-general in Addis Ababa to that of an embassy.

485. Editorial Note

The Security Council Resolution on the Operation of the Suez Canal

The Security Council debated the Suez Canal affair between 5-13 October. Before the Council was a complaint lodged by France and Britain on what was termed a "situation created by the unilateral action of the Egyptian Government in bringing to an end the system of international operation of the Suez Canal which was confirmed and completed by the Suez Canal Convention of 1888."

Prior to the debate Britain submitted to the Council the resolution of the London Conference of 22 August 1956 (U.N. Document S/3665) and together with France also submitted a draft resolution (See No. 474, n.1). Due to the importance of the subject, six of the Security Council members (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, Belgium and Yugoslavia) were represented by their foreign ministers. The Egyptian foreign minister also participated in the debate.

The Security Council held six public sessions and three closed-door sessions (On the debates see Nos. 474, 479 and 489). Parallel to these discussions secret negotiations were conducted between the foreign ministers of Britain and France on the one hand, and the Egyptian foreign minister on the other, with Hammarskjöld's active participation. At a meeting on 12 October the latter raised "six principles" and "five ways of action" to resolve the crisis (See *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 337, pp. 712-3). These six principles were found acceptable by all the members of the Council and served as a basis for the draft resolution which Britain and France submitted on 13 October, which was unanimously approved by all the Council members. For the text of the Resolution see the Main Volume, p. 801. This resolution is known as U.N. Document S/3675.

Britain and France also submitted an additional draft resolution, whose main points were the assertion that the London Conference resolutions were compatible with the six principles, and a call to Britain, France and Egypt to ensure the right of the Canal users in a manner no less effective than the London Conference resolution. Nine Council members supported this draft resolution, whereas the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia opposed it. Soviet opposition prevented adoption of the resolution.

The Security Council also decided unanimously to invite Israel and the seven Arab states which asked to participate in the debate (Iraq, Jordan,

Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Libya) to submit their complaints in writing. In a memorandum submitted by Israel on 13 October (copy in File 93.03/3040/5) the history of the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal was reviewed, and in the conclusion it stated that on the basis of the Constantinople Convention of 1888 and the Security Council Resolution of 1 September 1951, the maritime powers had the right to engage in free trade with Israel via the Canal, and Egypt would bear responsibility for the results arising from any violation of this right.

486. A. Eban (New York) to G. Meir. 13 October 1956

Coded Tel. XA407; Outg.: 93.01/2188/11

Summary

Following instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,[1] Eban talked with Rountree about the Iraq issue. He explained that there was a vast difference between what Lawson had described and what Westlake had reported.[4] The British threat to enter the border war being waged on the side of Jordan represented a new factor, as did the Nuri al-Sa'id speech and the response of the British Foreign Office spokesman.[5] Rountree replied that the United States had acted to obtain Israeli agreement for this step. The talks with the prime minister and Lawson had set in motion a process that could not be halted. It could not be claimed that the United States had ignored Israel's conditions. Rountree seemed visibly worried and suggested that Israel confer with Lloyd or someone in authority in his entourage. Eban believes that at this moment they must concentrate on delaying implementation of the plan in order to gain more time for diplomatic action.[6]

Notes

1. The conversation took place following an instruction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tel. TNWA547, 12 October 1956, 93.01/2188/11. Among other things it said that the essential goal was to obtain American pressure on the British not to implement the planned entry of an Iraqi Army force into Jordan.
2. No. 482.
3. No. 453.
4. See No. 481.
5. See No. 471, n. 1.
6. In the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Telegram to Eban, TNWA533, 14 October 1956, 130.09/2311/10) it said that the State Department had not given specific and binding answers regarding Israel's conditions, but had announced that

the British would do so. That is to say, it had acted to request Israel's agreement but had avoided assuming responsibility with regard to the conditions with which Israel had qualified that agreement. In any event, Nuri al-Sa'id's statement and the British threat shed a completely new light on the whole idea.

487. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in London. 13 October 1956

Coded Tel. 311; Outg.: 130.09/2321/3

Summary

Elath is directed not to take steps just now in the British Foreign Ministry following Westlakes's message.[2] They must leave the British in doubt as to Israel's next steps. On the other hand he should immediately see Gaitskell[4] and Israel's friends in both parties and express Israel's dismay over the British steps. The Foreign Ministry also informs him that they had instructed Eban and Tsur to act in their capitals against the British step with the aim of preventing the implementation of the British plan.

Notes

1. Meir's letter to Lawson – No. 483.
2. Westlake's message – see No. 481.
3. See No. 471, n. 1.
4. Instructions for the conversation with Gaitskell were sent to Elath in Ministry of Foreign Affairs telegram No. 301, 11 October 1956, in File 130.09/2321/3.

488. Y. Caroz (Paris) to the West European Division. 13 October 1956

Coded Tel. 748; Inc.: 130.09/2347/2

Summary

Caroz cites a report in *Le Monde* according to which the Algerian Liberation Front had sent a cable to the chief rabbi of the Algerian Jewish communities in which the Jews are called upon to adopt a position in the conflict in their country. They were trying to clarify details, but there were grounds for assuming that the reports were true. One of the demands of the rebels was

the abolition of the Crémieux law granting French citizenship to the Jews of Algeria.[1]

Note

1. Tsur alluded to this matter in his report at the Government session on 21 October and said: " Obviously the last thing the Jews must do is to give way on the Crémieux law; they must demand the same protection granted to a French citizen because that will make it possible in time of catastrophe at least to move to France. There are many Jews in Algeria who are thinking of this, but there are not many thinking of immigrating to Israel. There are a few hundred. The movement is beginning to develop and it could take on very serious dimensions in the near future. For the moment it has still not attained the proportions of a mass movement. On the other hand the movement of Jews to France is taking on the proportions of a veritable mass movement."

489. A. Eban (Washington) to G. Rafael. 14 October 1956

Coded Tel. WIA829; Outg.:93.01/2188/1

Summary

Eban sums up and assesses the debate in the Security Council. Britain and France undoubtedly regret the decision to bring the Suez issue before the Council. The debate did nothing to enhance their status. Although the principles[1] adopted sound fine, they do not dispel their resentment over the nationalisation nor advance their express demand for an international authority.

Israel, on the other hand, had won renewed approval for its right to freedom of passage, but this resolution was no more than another in the long list of resolutions and judgments already given in its favour. Consequently, Israel's centre of gravity must be in the practical arena, namely the creation of test cases to exploit actively the declared right of freedom of shipping. He intended to bring explicit proposals with him on his forthcoming visit to Israel.

Notes

1. See No. 485 (Editorial Note).
2. In this telegram (14 October, 93.01/2188/1) Eban reported on contacts behind the scenes to arrange for Israel's appearance in the Security Council debate. The United States supported Israel's appearance, but due to lack of time it was decided to adopt the suggestion of submitting the Israeli petitions in writing. In addition Israel insisted

that Dulles should make a speech in the final Council debate and explicitly reiterate both Israel's fundamental right to appear in the debate and the Council's obligation not to overlook the violation of the 1888 Convention and the 1951 Resolution.

490. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 14 October 1956

Coded Circular Tel. 183; Outg.: 130.09/2377/4

Summary

The division reports that the British chargé d'affaires met with the minister of foreign affairs regarding the Iraqi force. He said that he could not give precise details about the force, since the information had been given to Britain in confidence, but it would be insignificant as far as any danger to Israel is concerned. He again stressed that they would not cross the Jordan, and promised that Britain would use its influence to ensure quiet on the border. The minister of foreign affairs asked whether, if in light of developments Israel considered its security endangered and felt obliged to take measures, the British would then invoke their treaty with Jordan and use force against Israel. He answered: "Certainly."[1]

Note

1. The day after this conversation Westlake again met with the director of the British Commonwealth Division, twice, and gave him two different wordings concerning the entry of the Iraqi force into Jordan. These two versions did not satisfy Israel either (See the British Commonwealth Division to the Israel Missions Abroad, Circular 187, 15 October 1956, 130.09/2311/10).
From an American source Israel learnt that the British Foreign Office had been "amazed" on reading Westlake's telegrams on his conversations in Israel. It turned out that he had exceeded his authority by introducing many changes in the text, and was reprimanded for doing so. Afterwards Ambassador Nicholls asked for clear instructions to be sent to enable him to give reassuring and unequivocal promises to Israel (See Meroz's conversation with Bergus, 23 October 1956, 130.20/2480/11).

491. R. Shiloah (Washington) to J. Herzog. 15 October 1956

Coded Tel.WIA836; Outg.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

Shiloah reports on a conversation between Eban and the secretary of state which revolved around the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan. The secretary noted that the United States had conveyed Israel's reservations about this development to the British. The Americans understand that developments in the region and the manner in which the British had presented the matter to Israel had aroused apprehensions in Israel. They had examined matters again and were convinced that the conditions which Israel had set would be honoured. They believe that the move was in the best interests of both Israel and America. He stressed that the United States, and in his opinion France as well, was not a party to the threat towards Israel in the Tripartite Declaration. He also stressed that the United States did not participate in every discussion on change in the status quo and every such discussion required prior consultation with Israel. At the end of the conversation he conveyed the remarks of the president, with whom he had discussed the matter: the president, the secretary and the United States government were working to achieve a growing friendship between Israel and the United States government. The president knows that the situation in the region is volatile and charged, and that those who reside there are sensitive and subject to the pressure of forces and factors. The president hopes that matters will not worsen and that a situation will not be created which will put Israel in the wrong before the world, which would render the United States position difficult.[4]

Notes

1. See No. 486.
2. Eban had left for consultations in Israel.
3. The main point of this telegram (Eban to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 October 1956, 130.09/2311/12) is that Eban believes it is extremely important to disabuse the Americans of the impression of Israel's conditional assent to the entry of Iraqi forces into Jordan which they had gained in Lawson's first conversation with the prime minister on 1 October.
4. A full report on this conversation is in File 130.20/2480/11. Following the conversation Ben-Gurion sent a Note to Eisenhower in which he reiterated Israel's apprehensions regarding the entry of the Iraqi army into Jordan, and requested that the United States intervene with Britain and other interested parties in order to prevent this step. See No. 498 and n.1 there.

492. A. Eshel (Jerusalem) to the Israel Minister in Warsaw. 15 October 1956

Copy: 130.11/2508/2

Summary

Eshel writes to the minister about the improvement in Israel-Polish relations. The importance of this improvement should not be exaggerated, and it did not signify that Poland had decided to abandon the general political orientation of the Eastern bloc towards Israel. In any event, it should be exploited to explain Israel's position. Israel's status in Warsaw should also be exploited so that the Poles would express more positive opinions about Israel in internal bloc discussions.

493. D. Hammarskjöld [New York] to M. Kidron (New York). 17 October 1956

Copy: 130.02/2448/5

Notes

1. This refers to Ben-Gurion's statement at the opening of the political debate in the Knesset on 15 October. In this statement he voiced criticism of the Armistice supervision organisation, which had failed in its efforts to thwart acts of hostility against Israel but behaves as if it were international territory and adopts a double standard towards Israel on the one hand and the Arab states on the other (See *Divrei Haknesset* (Knesset Reports), Vol. XXI, Second Session of the Third Knesset, 15 October 1956, pp. 62-63).
2. See No. 438, n. 4.
3. Hammarskjöld reiterated these remarks in a conversation on 23 October with Kidron, who gained the impression that the secretary-general's main goal was to get out of the Middle East arena apart from Suez, and that he virtually admitted having failed in his mission (See Kidron to Rafael, Tel. X765, 24 October 1956, 130.09/2332/2).

494. J. Tsur (Paris) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 17 October 1956

Coded Tel. 774: Inc.: 130.02/2450/4

Summary

Tsur reports on a conversation with Pineau.[1] He expressed to him Israel's appreciation for his activity on the Iraq issue.[2] Pineau replied that nevertheless the Iraqis would introduce a force of company size into Jordan. France had received all the guarantees and safeguards it had requested from the British and he advised Israel not to initiate action against Jordan. With regard to Suez he said that Shepilov had told him that Israeli ships must pass through[3] and also that the idea of a trial convoy was on the agenda.[4]

Notes

1. Prior to the conversation the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a briefing to Tsur and Elath. It said that although the British and Americans had initially presented the dispatch of the Iraqi force to Jordan as a measure designed to stabilise the shaky situation in Jordan, the recent statements of Nuri al-Sa'id, the reaction of the British spokesman and the tenor of the recent British appeals to Israel attest to the fact that the intention is to present the entry of the forces as a measure of defence against Israel. Tsur was directed to find out what the British intentions were and the possibility of France exerting influence in the matter and also to ensure that in the forthcoming Security Council debate concerning Qalqilya (see No. 496) France would impose a veto on any resolution condemning Israel (See the West European Division to the Israel embassies in Paris and London, Tel. 191, 16 October 1956, 130.09/2377/4).
2. See No. 473, n. 4.
3. In the margins of this sentence someone wrote: "When should they pass through?"
4. During the visit of the British prime minister and foreign minister to Paris (see n. 5 below) rumours spread that in talks with their French counterparts they would discuss among other things a trial convoy through the Suez Canal, which would also include an Israeli vessel. This rumour was denied both by the British and by the French (See *Ha'aretz*, 18 October 1956).
5. On 16 October British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden and Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd arrived in Paris for talks with their French counterparts. At the end a joint statement was issued, according to which both states insisted that the proposal of the 18 states regarding international supervision of the Suez Canal had to constitute the basis for a settlement. Views were also exchanged on the other problems of the Middle East and it was decided to hold constant contacts on these issues between the two governments (See ibid.).

495. A. Chelouche (Moscow) to the East European Division. 17 October 1956

Coded Tel. 618; Inc.: 130.11/2506/7

Summary

In reply to the division's question,[1] Chelouche gives the wording of Mikoyan's remarks in reply to questions from a journalist. In essence, it was that the Soviet Union endorsed equal rights for all states in passage through the Canal, and the Israeli matter was not a serious issue, since the volume of its trade in the Canal was small.

Notes

1. In a telegram the East European Division asked the embassy in Moscow for the exact wording of Mikoyan's speech on the freedom of navigation and also for comments and assessments (The telegram, dated 16 October 1956, in File 130.11/2506/7).
2. In this telegram (to the East European Division, 16 October 1956, 130.09/2326/8) Chelouche wrote that this reply testified that only now had the Soviet fears of Western intervention in Suez or of the possibility of a Canal settlement without them been completely dispelled, and it could be seen as partially acceding to Israel's approach of 6 August. In any event, it did not represent any deviation from its unreserved support for the Egyptian position, and the question remained whether the Soviets were expressing support for Israel's right immediately, or only after a final settlement was reached.

496. Editorial Note

The Security Council Debate on the Qalqilya Operation

Following the Qalqilya operation Jordan submitted a complaint to the Security Council. The debate on the complaint opened on 19 October 1956. A report by the chief of staff of the U.N. observer force, Burns, on the incident and a letter from Hammarskjöld criticizing Israel for its lack of cooperation with the observer force were also on the table of the Council (both identified as U.N. document S/3685, also found in File 130.02/2453/8). The Jordanian representative, Abd al-Munim al-Rifa'i, gave a lengthy account of what he termed Israeli violations of Security Council resolutions and called for sanctions against Israel according to Article 41 of the U.N. Charter (this

article deals with complete or partial severing of economic ties, severing of diplomatic ties and restrictions on mail and communications links). Israel was represented by Kidron. Kidron gave a brief speech requesting postponement of the debate until the return of Eban, the head of the Israeli delegation, who was in Israel.

Eban himself spoke in the session of 25 October. He placed the responsibility for the border situation on Jordan and called on it to observe the ceasefire. The continuation of the debate was fixed for 30 October. Owing to the beginning of the Sinai campaign, the subject was removed from the agenda without any decision being reached (see report of the Israeli delegation to the U.N., 23 October 1956, 130.02/2440/3; *SCOR*, XI Year, 745 Meeting, 25 October 1956).

497. British Commonwealth Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in London. 19 October 1956

Coded Tel. 497; Outg.: 130.09/2321/3

Summary

The division reports a meeting of British Ambassador Nicholls with the minister of foreign affairs. In the conversation the minister reiterated in full Israel's complaints about the affair of the Iraqi force. Britain had not answered Israel's questions; had not consulted with it, had not taken into account Israel's vital interests and had confronted it with a fait accompli. Nicholls replied and gave a number of clarifications: 1. Britain had not said that it would honour its agreement with Jordan if Israel opposed the entry of the Iraqi army, but only if it attacked Jordan. 2. It was not correct that Britain supported a settlement on the basis of 1947 and the British Foreign Office spokesman had never said this. 3. Britain had never tried to erase the borders according to the U.N. resolution. At the end Nicholls said that he did not know when the Iraqi army would enter Jordan.[3]

Notes

1. On 21 October elections were held to the Jordanian parliament which ended with the victory of left-wing, anti-Western and pro-Nasserist parties. King Hussein was compelled to assign the formation of the government to Suleiman al-Nabulsi, the leader of the National Socialist Party.
2. See No. 496 (Editorial Note).

3. In another meeting with Meir, which took place on 20 October, Nicholls provided details about the Iraqi force due to enter Jordan: one battalion, which would not be equipped with tanks (but would be armed with anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns), which would be stationed between Mafraq and the Jordan-Iraq border, and whose role would be to guard storehouses, and a mechanised regiment to secure the roads in this area. This force would not be increased and would not move outside the area allocated to it (See the British Commonwealth Division to the Israel embassy in London, Tel. 350, 130.09/2321/3). The Iraqi force entered Jordan in November 1956 and, as agreed, did not venture outside the area allocated to it. On 9 December Jordan asked Iraq to evacuate the army from its territory and it complied with its request.

498. Message from Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem) to President Eisenhower (Washington). 20 October 1956

130.02/5938/3

Notes

1. The above message was transmitted by Reuven Shiloah to Secretary of State Dulles in a letter of 20 October 1956 (130.02/5938/3) and was given to the president in this form. See *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 395, p. 763, n.1.
2. See No. 491.
3. See No. 453.
4. See Eisenhower's reply, No. 507.

499. East European Division (Jerusalem) to the Israel Embassy in Moscow. 21 October 1956

Coded Tel. 402; Outg.:130.02/2153/10

Summary

The division reports on a conversation between the minister of foreign affairs and Soviet Ambassador Abramov on October 17 in which the ambassador was given a report on the possible entry of the Iraqi force into Jordan and Israel's opposition to this step.

Abramov listened, and said that the situation was complex and it was quite possible that there would be surprises. He noted the existence of forces opposed to this development, mainly in Iraq. The minister of foreign affairs replied that Israel could not rely on this opposition, since the opponents

were followers of Nasser and Israel would prefer more stable points of contact. Abramov promised to convey the remarks to his government.

Notes

1. See No. 495.
2. Shepilov reiterated Mikoyan's remarks in a conversation with French Minister of Foreign Affairs Pineau during a visit to Paris – See No. 494. The remarks were also published in the press – see, for example, *Ha'aretz*, 18 October 1956.
3. See Eshel to Avidar, Tel. 398,15 October 1956, 130.09/2326/6.
4. See No. 497 and n. 3 there.

500. Conclusions of a meeting.[1] 24 October 1956

Photocopy: Ben-Gurion Archives

Note

1. This summing-up was prepared at the end of the discussions between Britain, France and Israel which took place in Sèvres near Paris on 22-24 October. For details of the discussions that preceded the signing see M. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 252-266 [Hebrew]; M. Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 233-243. The document bears the signatures of Ben-Gurion for Israel, Christian Pineau for France, and Patrick Dean, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, for the United Kingdom. Ben-Gurion also initialled each of the first two pages of the agreement. The attached appendix was signed by Bourgès-Manoury, the French minister of defence. It is said that after the signing Ben-Gurion inserted the document in his waistcoat pocket. The document above was copied from the photocopy in the Ben-Gurion Archives.

501. G. Mollet to D. Ben-Gurion. 25 October 1956

Orig. IMDEA 890/73/2704

Note

1. The text of the letter: "Her Majesty's Government have been informed of the course of the conversations held at Sèvres on 22-24 October. They confirm that in the situation there envisaged they will take the action described. This is in accordance with the declaration enclosed with my communication of October 21."

502. Briefing by the Councillor for United Nations Political Affairs (Jerusalem, 25 October 1956)

Draft: 130.15/3743/4

Summary

The briefing was prepared for the eleventh session of the General Assembly.

The problem of Palestine: It was agreed that Israel would exploit the tendency among the Western nations to halt the policy of welfare and to rehabilitate and resettle the refugees in order to save on welfare payments. The delegation will present a plan with real substance for resettling the refugees and will detail Israel's concessions (releasing blocked accounts, the Johnston plan and its readiness to pay compensation). Israel will clarify its position on the question of compensation, the payment of which is conditional on the abolition of the boycott and the settlement of the refugee problem.

On the question of Jerusalem, Israel will not initiate a debate, but if one should arise, it will exploit the opposition of Jordan and the Arab states to internationalisation. If the general Palestine problem is raised Israel will try to respond with an initiative which will call for peace negotiations.

On global problems Israel will take the following stand: China's representation – it will support the replacement of the representation; acceptance of new members – it will support the acceptance of Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan and Japan. With regard to Cyprus, Israel will weigh up how to support Greece against Britain without offending Turkey. On the question of Irian, Israel will support Holland. On the issue of apartheid – it will support the adoption of the clause proposed for the agenda condemning the policy of apartheid. The delegation will try nevertheless to moderate the wording of the resolutions.

Notes

1. Henri Lebouisse, the director of UNWRA, was invited to visit Israel in February 1956. The date of the visit was changed several times and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs memorandum dated 31 October 1956 states that Lebouisse decided to postpone the visit until November, because of pressure of work. In the margins of this memorandum Eytan wrote: "He is being evasive…" (The memo in File 93.03/3065/4).
2. In this letter from the Conciliation Commission (In File 93.03/3065/4) there is a response to a letter of 11 March 1956 to the representative of the Conciliation Commission in Jerusalem, from which it emerges that the Israeli government had changed its previous position with regard to compensation for the property left by the

Arab refugees in Israel. The Israeli government was asked to reconsider its position. The reply of the Permanent Israel U.N. Mission, dated 25 October 1956, was evasive; it said that the letter dated 28 September had reached the mission on 10 October, that is, a day after the publication of the 15th report of the Conciliation Commission (U.N. Document A/3199), of 4 October, so that in any event there had not been sufficient time for the Israeli government to study the 28 September letter (In File 93.03/3065/4).

503. W. Eytan (Jerusalem) to the Israel Missions Abroad. 25 October 1956

Copy: 130.11/2503/8

Summary

Eytan instructs the missions not to use reports on increased immigration from Eastern Europe as a slogan in fundraising campaigns and to try to keep this topic out of the general and Jewish press.

504. Consultation on Israel's Relations with the Vatican. 25 October 1956

Original handwritten note: 130.10/2523/18

Summary

The director-general reports that Sasson had gained the impression that in the Vatican there is a tendency to distinguish between its position on the question of Jerusalem and its position on relations with Israel. Professor Dupront believes that there is room for rapprochement in view of the dangers of Communism and Islam.[1] Contacts should be renewed, after years without any contact.[2]

Herzog expresses doubt about the possibility of separating the issue of Jerusalem and the issue of relations with Israel. He suggests acting cautiously. It was decided to wait until after the U.N. Assembly.

Notes

1. Dupront was a professor at the University of Montpellier and an authority on medieval history. In connection with his scientific work he had visited Rome several times

and had close connections with the Church officials. These remarks were made in a conversation with Tsur, see his letter to Eytan, 22 November 1956, 130.02/2396/15.

2. For a summary of relations with the Vatican see N. Ben-Horin, Israel-Vatican Relations in the Web of Theology and Religious and Political Interests, in *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the First Fifty Years*, Part II, pp. 993-1033 [Hebrew].
3. Thomas J. McMahon, an American clergyman, director of the Catholic Welfare Association for the Middle East. He visited Israel on a mission for the Vatican in 1948 and 1949. See Vol. 4, Nos. 179, 215 and 314. No written agreement with him was found.
4. After the signing of an agreement between Israel and the Vatican on the establishment of diplomatic relations on 30 December 1993 the same person held the post of Nuncio (Ambassador) and Apostolic Representative, but he presented his credentials as ambassador.
5. Francis Joseph Cardinal Spellman, the Archbishop of New York.
6. In File 130.10/2523/18.
7. See Sasson's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 November 1955, ibid.
8. The cardinals who were possible candidates to be elected Pope after the death of the officiating Pope.
9. However the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not wait for the death of Pope Pius XII, and in January 1957 it sent Fischer on a mission to the Vatican, which was unsuccessful (See Fischer's report on the mission to the Vatican, 15 January-9 February 1957, 18 February 1957, 130.23/3102/18).

505. D. Ben-Gurion to G. Mollet (Paris). 26 October 1956

Copy: IMDEA 890/73/2704

Notes

1. No. 501.
2. No. 500.
3. See No 501, n. 1.

506. A. Eban (Washington) to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. 27 October 1956

Coded Tel. WIA875; Outg.: 93.01/2213/11

Summary

Eban reports that an instruction has been received to bring back Israeli pilots training in Canada and other officers on courses in the United States.

This gives the impression of an emergency situation. There are two possible reasons: either there is a basis for fearing an anticipated attack on Israel, and it would be better to say this to foreign elements in good time, or a plan is being prepared, and then it is better not to sow fears and harm security by actions which will give advance notice. Whatever the case may be, he asks that they inform him about the situation and the reasons for this serious development.[1]

Notes

1. Eytan replied to this telegram: "We have no alternative but to bring back the pilots and the other officers although we understand the difficulty. They are needed very urgently" (See Eytan to Eban, Tel. 611, 130.09/2311/10).

507. Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion. 27 October 1956

Copy: 93.08/417/3

Notes

1. See No. 498.
2. On the night of 24-25 October Israel began a general mobilisation in preparation for the Sinai Campaign.
3. This refers to remarks made to Eban only the following day. See No. 509.

508. Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion. 28 October 1956

Copy: 130.02/2401/13

Notes

1. No. 507.
2. In this declaration the United States, Britain and France announced that they would intervene (in the framework of the U.N.) if one of the Middle Eastern states threatened or tried to violate the borders or the sovereignty of another state. One of the paragraphs in the declaration dealt with the supply of arms for self-defence and for the defence of the region, to be implemented only in coordination between the Three Powers (See Vol. 5, Nos. 248, 249).

3. Parallel with this message a statement from President Eisenhower to the public was issued at a news conference on 28 October in which he reiterated the main points contained in the two messages to Ben-Gurion (See *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 395, p. 802).

509. Israel Embassy in Washington to G. Meir and J. Herzog. 28 October 1956

Coded Tel. WIA877; Inc.: 130.09/2311/12

Summary

The embassy reports on a conversation between the secretary of state and Eban. The secretary handed over the president's messages[1] and announced that a statement would shortly be issued regarding the evacuation of non-essential personnel from Israel and states in the region. Eban repeated the Israel government statement[2] and explained the Israel government's concern. There was a clear impression of a united aggressive intention on the part of Israel's neighbours and therefore a number of reserve battalions had been mobilised as a precautionary measure. The secretary said that to the best of his knowledge it was actually a total mobilisation and asked if Israel had information about a similar military build-up which necessitated a step of this nature. He did not see such a situation, and in his opinion it was a long time since Israel had been able to feel so secure. On the other hand he was ready to believe that this might be precisely the right moment for carrying out aggressive intentions.

Notes

1. See Nos. 507, 508 and n. 3 there.
2. In the government statement of 28 October it said among other things: "The resumption of the fedayeen actions by the rulers of Egypt in the past two weeks, from inside the borders of Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan; the establishment of a military alliance between Egypt, Jordan and Syria directed against Israel; the declaration of the rulers of the Hashemite state that at the top of their list of priorities is the war against Israel until its annihilation; similar declarations by the rulers of Egypt and Syria; the mobilisation of Iraqi armies on the Jordanian borders – all of these make it incumbent on us to mobilise a number of military reserves as a precaution to ensure the security of the borders and the frontier settlements [...] So that we should not be faced with a sudden attack from the south, north or east without sufficient defence, it was necessary to mobilise several reserve regiments and to station them on these borders, in order to repulse a possible enemy attack and to give us sufficient time, in

the event of an attack against us, to mobilise a reserve force, upon which and only on which the security of Israel depends [...]" *Ha'aretz*, 29 October 1956.

3. In an urgent telegram which he sent to Ben-Gurion after his conversation with Dulles, Eban voiced his frustration over the impossible situation he found himself in: "In all my born days I shall never understand how it was possible to make such rushed military preparations without the slightest guidance to me or to the other missions how to explain, to act and to respond. The perception among the public is of preparation for action without providing specific proof that an attack against us is imminent. I am bound and in my opinion entitled to ask: "a) What is really going on? b) How to react?" (See Tel. WIA876, 28 October 1956, 93.01/2213/11). A similar telegram was sent to the minister of foreign affairs (29 October 1956, 130.09/2311/12) to which she replied: "For reasons of caution best understood by you we could not and also cannot now give you details of all that is happening at the moment. We thought of sending a special envoy to you, but we were unable to do so" (29 October 1956, ibid.).

510. Meeting: D. Ben-Gurion – E. Lawson (Tel Aviv, 28 October 1956)

Note for the Record: 130.02/2448/6

Notes

1. See Lawson's telegram to the State Department of midnight, 28-29 October, containing a report of the meeting with Ben-Gurion (*FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. XVI, No. 401, pp. 811-813).
2. Lawson asked to meet with Ben-Gurion early on Sunday morning, 28 October, but Ben-Gurion delayed the meeting to the evening, after the decision to go to war had already been taken at the government's morning meeting.
3. No. 507.
4. The Note, dated 29 October 1956, in File 130.02/2401/13. Ben-Gurion placed the emphasis on the aggressive tendencies of Egypt and disregarded Eisenhower's request to avoid mobilising reserve forces.
5. Following talks in Amman between the chiefs of staff of Egypt, Syria and Jordan on 24 October an agreement was signed there on the setting up of a joint command of the armies of the three states, to be headed by the Egyptian chief of staff, 'Abd al-Hakim Amer. The commander of the Jordanian Army, Major-General Abu-Nuwar declared that the command would be activated in the event of an Israeli-Arab war.
6. At the end of his original report (see n.1 above) Lawson expressed some doubts as to the reliability of Ben-Gurion's remarks, noting that in his opinion Ben-Gurion was intentionally downplaying the extent of the mobilisation in Israel. He also alluded to the great care taken in the formulation of the statement and Ben-Gurion's refusal to state categorically that hostilities would not break out.

INDEXES

TO MAIN VOLUME

INDEX OF PERSONS

References are to document number and to the full document. For summaries of Hebrew documents, see this volume; for English and French documents, see the Main Volume.

Abbreviations:
n. – note

INDEX OF TOPICS AND PLACES

References are to document number and to the full document. For summaries of Hebrew documents, see this volume; for English and French documents, see the Main Volume.

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